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THE STATUETTE  
AND THE  
BACK GROUND.

*H. B. BREWSTER.*

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**THE STATUETTE**  
**AND**  
**THE BACKGROUND.**



THE STATUETTE  
AND  
THE BACKGROUND.

BY  
H. B. BREWSTER.

WILLIAMS AND NORGATE,  
14, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON;  
20, SOUTH FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH;  
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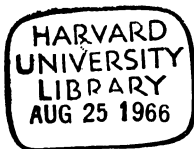
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## I. THE STATUETTE.

*(Extracts from a Correspondence.)*



# THE STATUETTE.

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## I.

### *RHODA TO HUMPHRY.*

I HAVE seen the statuette you and our friend W. speak of with such enthusiasm. What I think of it? I think it is a pretty little bronze figure. Let that suffice, and leave me to my melancholy. I see that it is nicely done; the arms and legs look as though they belonged to the body and had not been stuck on by mistake; the position is happy. I take note of it all and approve. There it ends for me. And you would give you know not what, perhaps a few years of your life, to have modelled the toy. That is what saddens me; this boundless admiration of things that seem to me minor; this worship of art for its own sake. You are Greeks, pagans—how

shall I style you ? Olympians, children of Apollo.  
Keats has spoken your creed :

" Beauty is truth, truth beauty ; that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

I cannot simplify life in this manner. Of course, I do not expect you to throw aside your brush and go about with a vial of oil to pour on people's wounds, or a lantern to light their path. I have heard of division of labour. Let each man work according to his gifts. But behind all these different labours is there not something that gives dignity to each of them, an inner disposition, a state of grace, to use an old-fashioned term, which ought in a certain measure to shine through ? And here is my quarrel with you : To me art seems lovable, because it can do more than allow this frame of mind to be assumed in the doer ; it can openly bear witness thereof, and almost force the spectator to participate therein. You seem to care nothing for this. You look at a statue, and all you heed is its lines and planes, the poising, the movement, the joints, the nerve and compactness of the thing. What it says is indifferent to you ; you do not ask it to speak. I do, and am a fool in your eyes for my pains. To me a work of art is a carrier pigeon. I search at once for the letter at its neck, and if

it brings none, I only wonder why the poor beast gave itself the trouble to fly to me. The message need not always be a very long or a very important one. A line will suffice, provided we recognize the handwriting. But you, when you get hold of the pigeon, you simply feel its pectoral muscles, take out your chronometer, and examine the record. The reason of which, we are told, is that you are an artist.

I have been asking myself what sort of an *ist* I am, since I am not an artist. You, doubtless, would have no difficulty in answering; you would call me a pietist. But that is wrong. I have none of those hopes and positive beliefs which are to the pietist what the partridge is to the *perdrix aux choux*. I think I am simply a personist. That there should be no such word will be no excuse for you, if you do not understand.

There are hours when it seems to me inadmissible that statues, and pictures, and poems, and symphonies should be counted among the really serious things of life. It is true that sometimes one can be wonderfully awakened and stimulated by æsthetic emotions, even as a soldier may fight all the better for the sound of the fife and drum. Little things may have great consequences, and in so far as works

of art can suggest noble feelings, they are good little things ; but greatness belongs to the feelings they stir—not to them. A child may start an avalanche that will sweep away a village ; this does not make a Titan of him.

What I care for is the inner life. Feelings are everything. Of course, they can lead—many say they must lead—to works of some kind, to expression, or to action. But these works themselves are ultimately of use only on account of the feelings they excite, or at least make possible. What would be the use of feeding a person who had always ugly feelings ? Now, a state of mind can be beautiful in itself. It need not lead anywhere ; it has got there already.

You seem to reverse all this. For you works have some extraordinary value in themselves. Look at that statuette of M.'s. You say it is "well done," and that suffices. You have no higher praise for anything. And you smile in derision, because I ask how that will help me. Yes ! help me. It seems to me that what makes the interest of life is a kind of war going on within us—a rebellion against alien rule for the lawful pretender—our own invisible person. And every day we are in danger. There is a little picture I know of, that represents a soldier sleeping with his head on the saddle and his foot

in the stirrup. It happens to be "well done," and I like it. It is an image.

Do not imagine that I wish every picture to be edifying. If I said so, I expressed myself badly. I am not quite so barbarous as our old friend the Colonel, who lays down the law æsthetic, and bids us judge poetry and music by the amount of martial ardour and patriotic enthusiasm they can stir in an Englishman's breast. But I want something more than form and colour. If there be nothing in a landscape but trees and rocks and water and clouds, of what use is the painter to me? I could have looked out of the window. His imitation cannot be more lifelike than nature. I want the spirit of those trees and rocks, the genius of the place; its poem, which may be an idyl or a sinister drama. There is nothing directly edifying in a sinister drama, is there? But we see behind it, as a background, the horror and the pity, the condemnation and the sadness, that must have been in the painter's mind; we hear a dirge and a warning. If these are missing, we are simply repelled. How the artist contrives to convey them with a mere touch of his brush is a mystery to me; but he does it. You do it yourself; no one better. So, too, in the representation of a lovely scene. It is not



the mere beauty I care for. Nature herself gives me that ; I need not trouble you. What I care for is your contribution ; the serenity, the joy that was in your mind and makes itself heard to me in fraternal endearing tones. In every work of art worthy of the name, there is something that calls me back to my true task and says : Remember ! What is a fine portrait but a glimpse into a soul—a deep and subtle reminder.

I always come back to this as to the main, the only essential thing : that which is within. You urge me very kindly not to neglect my little talents—my piano, my chalks, my feeble renderings in verse. At least, you say, they are something. What of that ? it is no great honour to be something. I know that a good many persons apparently think as you do. They astonish me. I have friends who complain of their uselessness ; their field of action is small, far smaller than their desires, and they have no gifts. If only they were painters, they say, or musicians, or poets, so that they might impart to others the longing of their souls ! But they have no talent. " We are dumb animals." Because they cannot convert their states of mind into works they consider themselves failures.

It is a distressing mistake. Why should works be better than moods ? The reverse were

far truer. Except a few masterpieces that would hold in a small building, what are the pictures, and the statues, and the books of the past? A waste of canvas, and marble, and paper. Nobody admires them; nobody reads them. It fares no better with the deeds of men of action. Who cares for the battles of Prince Eugène, or the fortune of the Fuggers? Surely these things weigh less than the dust on the chronicles that record them. Take them one by one, all these men who had the power of action or the gift of expression, and their toil will seem a derision on their own heads if they have nothing to show behind it. Well, then, where is the worth of the vaunted conversion of moods into expressions or actions? Might I not claim with greater right that it is just the other way? The very works that shout the pæan of nothingness when taken on their own merits, command my respect, and almost my love, as soon as I fancy behind them the moods that are still living in us, and must have animated the worker, or his toil was vanity and vexation of spirit. Do you recollect how, in the beautiful old liturgy, the dead plead before the throne of Osiris? Even so, I like to imagine the artist or the warrior pleading by the side of his poor old pictures or his neglected tomb: "Judge me not by the little

cobweb on which I caught some rays of transient fame; already it hangs in shreds. The grace has departed from the traces of my brush; the roll of my drums is as muffled as though they were under the sea. Judge me by that which has not perished, for it is thy breath, O Master of life! Judge my by my longing. I have striven. I have looked beyond. I have turned aside from shadows. I have walked in the company of thoughts. I have forgotten my troubles and remembered my desire. And though my work is as naught, the love that was behind it has hummed me to sleep at night, year after year, and made me greet the light of morning with a silent cry of joy. I am pure! I am pure! I am pure!"

And Osiris will turn upon him the favour of his countenance, for he knows that works are worthless if they do not stand as signs for moods of perfect and self-sufficient beauty in the worker's mind.

## II.

### *HUMPHRY TO RHODA.*

I CANNOT discuss art with you. I have devoted much more time to practice than to theory, and my small lights on the subject are quite insufficient to dispel the Egyptian darkness, out of which you clamour. One might as well try to illuminate a cathedral with a wax match. You must ask Walter; I believe he knows. At least, I have heard meditations of his not absolutely incongruous; and that is probably all we can demand, considering we have no common unit to which to reduce words and things of the eye. But your views of life, your general beliefs, are discussable; and I mean to attack them as soon as I can find a moment's leisure to collect my thoughts.

It is all very pretty, and fervent, and young. I was reminded of the verse you once quoted to me from "Leconte de Lisle":—

"J'entends chanter l'oiseau de mes jeunes années."

You are so devoutly of your own opinion, that it seems a shame to contradict you. I feel

inclined to say: as you like; let us play hide and seek again, or hunt the slipper, as we did twenty-five years ago. But we couldn't; at all events, not for a whole afternoon and the next day, too. That is why I will speak out. I want you to make a new start and begin a second youth, instead of clinging to the remains of the first.

You are a "personist." I accept your new-fangled term; it goes to the root of the evil. Of course you act and think; everybody has to more or less, and it may happen to be more with you. But that weighs little in your balance; above all and essentially, you feel. Thoughts and actions you judge by the moods they lead to or presuppose. And your favourite moods all tend one way. What you enjoy in them is—in your words—the sensation of your own invisible person; a transfigured and magnified self.

Now what surety have you that this inner presence, in the service of which you find beatitude, is not of the same texture as the paradise of the opium-eater? You take footing on no acquired knowledge of whatsoever description, as far as I can see, neither rational nor supernatural. You think you can afford to dispense with vouchers—you are in possession

of the higher truth, the inward, ultimate certitude: that of sensation.

This higher truth is no truth at all. Sensation of the kind you appeal to, unsupported save by its own intensity and delight, proves nothing, marshals and disciplines nothing. It is a barren excitement, like that of alcohol or haschisch, only a little more delicate—sensuality *ad usum delphinæ*.

I scribble these notes to you in the midst of my work; forgive their disorder. Your heresies run in my head, and every now and then I put down my implements to take up the thunders of the true church and rattle them in your ears.

This is the first commandment: thou shalt not live inwardly.

I cannot imagine how you have persuaded yourself into the belief that feelings and moods are durable. It is the hard, insensible, exterior part of us that counts. We are like the tiny molluscs and foraminifera whose shells form our cliffs and marble quarries. In those shells were living creatures, aware, doubtless, in their way, of pain and pleasure, and to whom nothing seemed so important as the comfort and serenity of their inner adjustments. The chalk of their little dwellings was of small account to them;

it proceeded from them and was at once out of their consciousness. Can any microscope to-day, or any balance, find a trace of their serenities? But the Rocky Mountains are made of what these humble workmen prized least of themselves.

The story of man is the same. It is as though his outward reactions gradually hardened round him into an independent coating, a shell intermediate between what seems his true self and the rest of the world. The more interest he takes in this outer self, the more pitiably foolish he appears to the mystic who bids him look inward and seek eternity in a little lump of quivering, throbbing jelly, that will to-morrow be dissolved in the sea. Not so the shell. Centuries and ages after it was moulded, it will be hewn out of the rock it has helped to form, and be wrought into statues or palaces. Of the myriads of human beings who have lived and died on this earth, every single one has felt something of what the mystic loves and praises as the aim of life, has thought himself the stage of some all-important drama, the stake of a stupendous game that must be gained or the universe will totter and fall in heaps.

What remains of all this emotion? It has vanished beyond hope of recovery, as utterly as

the shadow of smoke. That which remains of past generations, the inheritance we have to increase and pass on to others, is the sum of their deeds. However minute and anonymous they may be, at least they are realities. But as long as men are gregarious animals, so long will their inner life, their self-consciousness, be the least interesting thing about them. All the time and attention they devote to it, is so much taken from their effectiveness.

I have composed an allegory for you.

There is a great island in distant latitudes. All along the coast the white men have opened factories and founded colonies. These trade with each other and with the world across the sea. But they have little or no commerce with the interior of the island—a vast unhealthy region, where men of another colour follow their own ways. Every now and then rumours reach the coast of a strange civilization hidden inland behind the swamps and deadly forests; reports of mysterious ceremonies, of the pomps of a splendid court, of a veiled queen surrounded by high priests. The colonists turn a deaf ear; they have their work to attend to. But among the emigrants that pour in from the far world, some there are who get wind of these rumours,



and who, heedless of warnings, start off for the dark Eldorado. They are never heard of again, or they return broken down and bewildered, glad to be allowed to render menial service on the wharves.

Must I interpret ?

Each of us is like this island. Just as there is a superior race of men settled along its shore, so are our higher centres of activity close to the surface, in frequent and easy communication one with another, and with the outer world. The useful part of every supervening impression stops in this region, entering at once into its economy and system of business relations. But another part wanders inward towards the mysterious self that reigns in the land of dreams.

This, the beguiled, the lost part, is what you speak of and praise as "feeling." The rest, all the perceptive element retained and made use of on the busy coast, seems to you uninteresting and unconvincing. You crave for the inner certitude; what you ask of every state of mind, and all you care for, is its own self-delivered invoice, the opinion it has of itself. You scorn the idea of looking at it as though you witnessed it in someone else, as though it were one of the things the knowledge of which comes to us by

external perception, in the lucidity of indifference. But I should like to know what aberration, from the drollest to the most lamentable, has not been sanctioned by inward assurances? Comedy revels in the inward assurances of the miser and the egoist, and of all such as deign not, or dare not, appeal to an external tribunal. Think you there is an exception for the mystic, because he calls his passion the thirst of eternity? It is only a voluptuous deliquium. Those who have indulged too deeply in its solitary delight, have wandered away from the human fold. In times gone by they have climbed on to Stylites' pillar. They have flocked into convents. You can see them to-day in the streets, bounding like innocent maenads, with blue bow ribbons under their chins, to the sound of the bugle and tambourine. You have not come to that, and never will, I know it, nor to anything ugly. And yet there is something amiss in your life. You have subjected the superior to the inferior. Perhaps I ought to say that you have not yet thrown off the yoke we most of us bear during childhood. We begin with "feelings," and we grow up to perception and activity. We begin with theology, philosophy, and magic; pentagrams and meditations on the essence of things: in the beginning was this or that. And we end by building dams

and clearing wastes. Ah! what a beautiful story.

Revert for a moment to my allegory of the island with its different coloured races. Well, I think our individual evolution recapitulates the history of mankind, which is simply the history of the gradual conquest of the world by the white race. As we wax in vigour of body and mind, an ever-increasing part is played in our consciousness by outer relations, foreign traffic, responses to the waves of the human sea that beats on our Aryan shoreland, while gradually darkness and oblivion settle on the murmuring forests of the aboriginal realm within.

In your island the veiled queen still reigns; not despotically, I grant, as in the Stylites, and nuns, and pietists, we were speaking of just now, or as in the disciples of Tolstoi, if such there be; not to the mark of extravagance. But yet with enough authority to make the flag of fiction float over all the land. To her you refer every new impression; it must have her license before you will admire, or laugh, or love; for the only important thing about it is how it will affect the life of your soul. But an impression that has been sent up to court in this manner, is unavailable on its return for all practical purposes. The workers will have none

of it ; it has lost caste among them ; it has become a thing of show. You and your innumerable sisters and brothers, people of the inner life, you all of you bear on your face the same expression of refined constraint, like that of a ruined aristocracy consoling itself by its exclusiveness for its departed power. To you, intensity of life means inward pageants and rites. You wonder how those around you live ; and you watch with beautiful, pained eyes, the hard men who are doing the work of the world. In them are no whispering avenues down which theories, clad in white, bear incense to the palace of memory.

People whose fibre is taut and firm, respond like elastic walls to the slightest impact. They seem almost as insensible as the cushions of a billiard table. Sorrow and pleasure alike bound back ; and because nothing eats into them, you think they forget. It looks as though each commotion were entirely restituted in the answer it provokes. But in reality, part of it is retained in vibrations quite as intense as those that quiver inward and make the earnestness of other natures ; only they are treasured in the same wonderful responsive surface that receives them, and are silently converted there into the force of which earnest natures can be so destitute : talent,

capacity. The unforeseen association, the automatic sureness, the quick flash, are elaborated there, in the soulless crust. These are the men that *can*. Whatever their work may be, it has the indescribable something which is as the ring of true coin. The touch of perfection wheresoever visible—the measure, the rhythm, the timing, the invention—reveals a trace of their strain, a drop of the blood of the masters. Who knows? perhaps of the gods who trod the earth of old; perhaps of the glorious Heracles. Father, I lift my hands to thee! I ask thee not for a contrite heart. I ask for grit and backbone. Silence the foolish harps that wail within me. Seize me by the nape of the neck, and shake the nonsense out of me. Dispel my childish visions; lead me forth into the fight. Teach me to watch, and to understand, and to pounce. Give me the eye of the hawk. Give me strength to follow thy footprints westward, and save me from fond recollections; even from the hymns that rise to Osiris. Amen.

Pray don't imagine that I am urging you to perform athletic feats. I have taken Heracles as a symbol for outward reactions. All I mean to say is this: it is playing at dolls to live for states of mind. Don't answer that we know nothing but states of mind and can never get

out of them ; it is a metaphysical quibble. Everybody knows the difference between launching forth, and communing with his own heart ; between living for something that seems exterior to him—an enterprise of some kind where success has a recognized positive measure independent of his sensations—and living for the sake of an inner approbation, which depends solely upon these. Often it is at the expense of our activity that this approbation is purchased, because its first requirement may be a feeling of lofty far-awayness that makes the complex conditions of effective work seem an impure compromise. And when it does not paralyze our activity, it at least taints it with an unreal pedantic character ; takes from it its spontaneousness, its unpremeditation, its disinterestedness. Everything we do must, then, be done for the sake of something else. We must even eat and drink, according to the old phrase, for the glory of God ; which is the least genial way imaginable of eating and drinking. I don't think I am exaggerating. If works of art are to be looked upon as carrier-pigeons bringing tidings from the Holy Land, why should not our meals be looked upon as carrier-pigeons destined to bear our reply there ? We ought to eat in religious collectedness, in view of the noble efforts into

which we are about to convert some ounces of nitrogen and carbon. You would be ashamed to eat your dinner in this spirit, and so would any sane person. We eat because we are hungry, and we need not bother about repair of tissue and the conditions of activity of our moral and intellectual faculties; they are results that follow of their own accord and all the better for our non-interference. It is just the same with art or works of art. We produce them because our eyes are hungry, and for no other reason. The ennobling feelings which they may suggest have nothing to do with artistic production; they are after-effects—distant, compounded, and curiously distorted shadows bearing no resemblance to, and warranting no judgment of, the original forms. You cannot judge a dinner by the amount of fervour with which grace has been said before or after. Neither can you judge a picture by the psychological intentions of the painter or the spiritual quickening of the spectator.

But I am trespassing on grounds I wish to leave to others. Artists should not talk about art; they can do better. It is your introspective attitude towards life that I wished to attack, and the value of feelings as tests.

### III.

#### *RHODA TO HUMPHRY.*

I WONDER your letter reached me and can hardly believe you will ever get this reply, which is only to bear you my thanks. We seem to be living in different planets. The reason of which is probably in what you say of talent : that it is in the crust. Evidently I have no crust. I am all crumb, and therefore cannot understand things that seem elementary to you. Be it said to my shame. The exterior test, for instance ; that innocent, simple-hearted, unquestioning love and admiration of success ! very difficult to understand. Where are the beautiful fountains of illusion where this mysterious faith can be drunk : that a tomb in Westminster Abbey, or the mention of one's name in the newspaper, or any such goal of ambition, can give us happiness ? I seek in vain within me for any such power of poetic transfiguration, and I feel as old as Methuselah. It is quite refreshing to learn that I am playing at dolls. But perhaps you do not care for happiness ? Nothing would astonish me now.



Seriously ; I see you are afraid I shall end by turning away from the world and losing myself in mystic voluptuousness, because I said, rather violently, that there are moments where my interest in works of art wanes. You talk of Stylites and nuns and jumping saints, and though you are not quite so unkind as to count me among them, yet I am not out of danger ; I am a mild case.

Well, I protest. I am not quaffing joys ineffable by the side of which all things earthly seem vain, ugly, and sinful. I am simply a person who objects to being cut into little pieces each of which is to wriggle about independently, unconscious of its neighbours. I want to feel their inter-dependence, their unity, their bond. This is the feeling that I call "myself ;" it does not demand that they should be starved or crushed ; on the contrary, it demands that each of them should be alive and vigorous, but only in the measure and conditions in which it will not break or even weaken the common bond. Of course there is restriction here ; a certain amount of turning away ; a grain of asceticism, if you will—but it is the asceticism of those who love life, not of those who despise and condemn it. It increases my interest in the game ; it draws me closer to my fellow creatures.

Don't say anything against it ! But you—what have you done with happiness ? Tell me, does it also dwell in the crust, like talent ?

Since you will not answer about art, and refer me to Walter, I am sending him your letter. I wish you would send him mine so that he may have both sides of the case before him. There shall be no rest on the face of the earth until this question is settled between us.

#### IV.

##### WALTER TO RHODA.

I SHOULD not have courage to tackle the problems you set me if they came before me in the abstract. Only friendship could have roused me to the effort. I must make a confession. Abstract questions do not interest me as much as they used to; which may be a sign of decrepitude. But persons interest me more, and, so far as thoughts can bring me into contact with the living, I care for them still.

Your letters, or documents, followed me here on the snow-fringed slopes, among the firs and birches and rhododendrons. There are herdsmen's huts yonder where you can drink draughts of milk that would kill you in the lowlands. There are waterfalls and torrents and horse-shoe rocks, where you can indulge in shower-baths that make you feel as though the world were five thousand years younger. It would be a very neat analysis that could do as much for us. There are crags from which you can watch, far below you, eagles cruising on their steady wings. It is hard to sit indoors and

write while sungilt ridges beckon from the deep blue sky. But I will think of you and Humphry and try to collect my ideas. Nothing is as good as muscular fatigue, save this one thing only: friendship, with its various nuances.

By this time you are doubtless crying victory. I must be on your side in the discussion, or I should care less for the rhododendrons, the blue sky, and the friends. I have betrayed myself, and am convicted of loving some moods irrespective of any consequent benefit—just simply for themselves. Well, I admit it; this I will concede to you at once. There are states of mind that stand in need of no justification by works. They are perfect—not because they prompt great deeds, or end in exquisite expression, or teach us resignation, or impel us to almsgiving and sanitation. They are not drafts payable in coin. They themselves are the coin and the payment. That they are intangible and evanescent does not inconvenience me. The least intangible and evanescent of things would probably be a very big heap of stones or a huge cake of platinum; yet there would be less perfection in it than in the sound of a sweet singer's voice that is heard for a moment and sinks into silence for ever.

I hold with you that it is a great mistake to

despise as selfish, sterile enjoyments, all moods to whose worth deeds or visible signs of some kind do not testify. Some such there are that no more need buttressing than does beauty. They need not lead to works, because they are works themselves, the products of a great and silent industry, revealed to us in them; monuments of the most delicate architecture. The sensations due to obscure workings of our machinery; the spirit in which we respond to our surroundings; the memories we keep with us and those we put aside; the favourite trains of thought which may either blend or clash in discord with our daily impressions—all these are materials out of which we raise the airy but marvellous fabric of our moods, wherein is displayed the same faculty of organization, the same power of abstraction and selection, as when we choose among forms, or sounds, or men, those that can work together, assigning them an end and determining the part of each. We all know what it is to feel like a puppet dancing madly at the end of unseen strings, or like a drifting straw. These are miserable states; their vileness is quite equal to that of an unsuccessful sonnet. Then, surely, no art is greater than that by which we coerce their confusion into harmony. Is any victory of expression a more

wonderful act of creation than the putting in order of our inner world—the evoking it out of chaos?

Will it disappoint you now to hear that, this notwithstanding, I agree in the main with Humphry about art? Probably the point where you and I diverge is this. I am inclined to think that what makes the value of the states of mind you prize so highly, is *not the nature of the feelings they clothe themselves in, but the constructive force, the power of organization from which they result.* And I do not see why the same power should not be manifested in works that make no appeal to those particular feelings because they are the products of a different organ dealing with a different material.

You are aware of a certain moral condition that gives you unsurpassable and perfect satisfaction? very well. But it is not for all that, the unknowable, the absolute thing—how shall I say? It is not the divine presence, to speak as the mystics; it is a deed of unconscious art in honour thereof. It is your song of praise. But why should the artist's performance re-call it to our memory? He is not here to praise your praise, but its object. He must build as you built, and this he does with data that have nothing in common with yours. His mission

is not to commemorate your success, but to score a similar one with totally dissimilar means. He has to make order in the chaos of things visible.

Just as the turbid agitation of the inner world is calmed in certain minds by some beautiful hidden process of sorting and abstracting and grouping, so that over the confusion of innumerable memories and appetites, light dawns, and the lawful types appear serene in the morning mist of intelligent good will ; so, too, the confusion of visual impressions, in which we, most of us, live, is mastered and chastened by the painter's eye. He sees much more than we do, and much less. We meet the same face day after day, and think we know it thoroughly ; we could recognize it among thousands after years of absence. Yet we have never really seen it. We could not describe the angle of the nose and forehead ; we may even not have noticed the colour of the eyes. All we know is the sum total of our blurred impressions. And if we attempt to analyse them ; if we try to draw or model the face, it will at once be apparent that, though we see indistinctly, we see too many things. The best we can do by dint of attention and patience, is a conscientious, worthless imitation, far less suggestive than the sketch or rough

cast an artist will toss off in a few pencil strokes or pressures of the thumb.

Properly speaking, there is no visible world for us, the herd; only a visible disorder full of dim suggestions that become significant by the assistance of other experiences. We use our visual impressions, as a blind man uses his stick, to gather notions. Our stick is longer and quicker than his, but no less dead and fruitless in itself. But the artist has no need to knock the pavement and the house doors with it. It is not a means for finding his way about; to him it is the tree of life. We, the half blind, we value our eyes for the indirect services they render us; they help us to earn our livelihood; they guide our hands, or they cater for our pens. Further, they minister to our sentiments; the rays they let in are as a rush of air on Eolian harps. But this has nothing to do with art; it does not make us a whit less blind. A picture is none the better for the vistas of thought it may open to us, or the high aspirations it may rekindle. Such reminiscences are of moods which have already achieved in their way the task that the picture undertakes to achieve with forms and colours, and which it cannot shirk by referring the spectator to the exploits of another organ on another field. The very same reason that makes



the mere having of certain moods an achievement in itself needing no visible and marketable sign of its worth—I mean the fact that they are already the results and profits of an admirable industry—this same fact makes them unfit to be used as standards of other works. The works of each industry must be estimated by the price they command on their own market. The eye has its own world—creates its own world out of a disorder which those alone perceive as such, who are in some measure capable of struggling with it. And it does so by means so exclusively its own, so different from the means which are of use in the world of memories, feelings, thoughts, and speech, that no expression of them is possible in words. We may talk for hours, or write volumes, about the reason of the beauty of this statue and that picture—it is all by the side of the mark. The reason is in the eye, and nothing can force it on to the tongue.

Similarly, the attempt to start from thoughts or moods, and to evoke them on canvas, with the help of forms and colours chosen for that purpose, and not because of their value as agents in a scheme of visual organization, is a literary, a sentimental, a moral effort—not an artistic one. Only those who have in some degree the power of abstraction in their eye, recognize the artistic

effort when they see it. The others neither recognize it nor ask for it. They ask for something human!—the coarser ones for an amusing anecdote, or an embodiment of their day-dreams; the more refined for some poetic excitement: a scene of peace or of desolation, the echo of an idyl, the foreboding of a tragedy, a condensed biography, a glimpse into a soul. Something for the mind or for the heart; as little as possible, if you please, for so inferior an organ as the eye. Kindly paint so that we can find an appropriate quotation in verse for each of your pictures. *The Illustrated Psychological News.*

There are several objections which I foresee on your part; chiefly these two: Why not paint any subject, the most trivial, or the most revolting? The eye can be as busy with such a one as with the most exalted. And secondly: whence comes it that many undisputed master-pieces have an air of moral purity or grandeur that impresses even those whose eyesight is habitually vague and uncultured?

I will answer very briefly, and you yourself must fill out the sketch.

Firstly, then, subjects interesting in any way for other than visual reasons, so that the attention of the spectator is diverted from forms and

colours to reminiscences and emotions therewith connected, are badly chosen. So, too, are those that suggest associations of a trivial or subordinate character, incongruous with the high degree of abstraction and elimination which artistic creativeness supposes.

As for the poetic or religious character of certain works of art, I imagine that it is due to the imprint on them of the same constructive genius that is the builder of the soul, not to the nobility which the theme they treat may or may not have when put in words and dragged from the tribunal of vision to that of discourse.

I do not pretend to explain how people who usually see very badly can become aware of this imprint; it is a case of obscure sympathy. We know very little about sympathy. Recollect the meeting of Napoleon and Goethe. They had very little to say to each other, and yet each of them went away with the impression that he was not alone of his calibre in the world. Thus the mystic sometimes recognizes a colleague in the artist. But as soon as he begins to talk and explain and exhort, the unfortunate artist listens in bewilderment to a voice that seems to be clamouring out of Egyptian darkness, as Humphry expresses it. Think it over. Humphry is right about this, and you about moods. At least

—but there would be too much to say. Perhaps if rain comes, or snow, which is the usual aspect of rain up here, I will hold forth again. I would like to convert you.

V.

RHODA TO WALTER.

I WILL think it over. Partly it pleases me, and partly I am afraid. It gives me a strange penitent shiver to reflect that in the works, and perhaps even in the lives of people whom I have hitherto pitied, there may be the very desire and the achievement I fancied they had forgotten! Do you remember Watteau, in Pater's "Imaginary Portraits"? "I am struck by the purity of the room he has re-fashioned for us," writes the introspective Flemish maiden in her exquisite journal — "*a sort of moral purity, yet in the forms and colours of things.*"

It may be.

But at least I would ask you to temper the rigour of your theory and to be less severe against reminiscences. They may, it is true, and I feel the weight of your argument, they may interfere with our eyesight, but how often they can quicken it by captivating our attention! It is asking a good deal to bid us look at pictures with our eyes only. Our eyes do not stalk about the world alone; they take the rest of us with them,

and—rightly or wrongly—the rest of us will have something to say. Let me quote again from the same journal about Watteau: “He has completed the ovals—the Four Seasons. Oh! the summer-like grace, the freedom and the softness of the ‘Summer’—a hay-field such as we visited to-day, but boundless, and with touches of level Italian architecture in the hot, white, elusive distance, and wreaths of flowers, fairy hay-rakes and the like, suspended from tree to tree, with that wonderful lightness which is one of the charms of his work. I can understand at last, through this, what it is he enjoys, what he selects by preference from all that various world we pass our lives in.” Evidently a train of poetic associations has been started in the spectator’s mind; visions of a world of refined elegance, gentle manners, and idle love, have crossed the distant Italian architecture, and awakened sympathetic musings. These are auxiliary reminiscences. Would it be wise to despise them? They help the weaker organ.

About moods. I am glad you agree with me that to feel one’s self in order morally is something, is a great deal; my natural impulse would be to say—is everything. But here, of course, you would stop me. This sense of interior unity

which I am accustomed to look upon as the aim and criterion of life, you look upon as merely one of the many possible cases of successful abstraction and organization. In your eyes the soul is a speciality; it is the result of a never to be apprehended force at work on a particular field and expressing itself in feelings determined by the nature of that field; not the force itself welling directly into our consciousness, pristine and untranslated. What I feel as my very self, you feel as a bust of Psyche, and you write underneath: "To the unknown God." You make our faculties independent: "The product of each industry is to be judged by the price it commands on its own market." Of course I understand that this independence is more or less superficial; you accept it tranquilly, just because in all our various gifts you see the same plastic power moulding different materials. But what I miss in this scheme is the "something to go by." If my faculties and instincts are independent of each other, save in an obscure co-operation over which I have no control, why should I not give each of them free rein, and trust blindly to some ultimate adjustment between them? As long as I believe myself in possession of a common standard by which I can measure and estimate my various activities, a standard

such as I am accustomed to seek in my conscience, and such as Humphry doubtless finds in masterliness of work of any tangible kind, I know where and how to renew within me the strength of restraint and self limitation. But you, what can you turn to ?

I trust it will snow soon and long, in your mountains.



## VI.

### *WALTER TO RHODA.*

Oh, what a task you set me! But I have no right to evade it: the problems of art and conduct are at root one and the same.

You ask me what I turn to, what I go by? Are you sure that there is or need be anything to go by, and that we are at our best when we strive to conform ourselves to something previously thought out or felt?

Recollect the best moves you have ever made, your happiest decisions. They were not imitative acts; you were not conforming your conduct to some principle, though a principle may afterwards have been at hand to justify your choice; you were perceiving a reality formed by the meeting of certain persons and certain feelings in certain circumstances. And this perception is distinctly as creative an act as that by which the artist picks out of millions of eligible lines and hues and shades, just the few which have a superior spectacular value. He is not a mere copier. Nor are we, in the moments I speak

of. We act in such moments as though we had a special organ like the eye, an original autonomous faculty whose approval cannot be derived from anything but the satisfaction of its own wants. We may turn subsequently to other considerations and plead in favour of our conduct that it agrees with the requirements of spiritual life, or that it will be useful to the community or serviceable to our worldly interests, but these are after-thoughts, and minor points.

Just as one cannot say of a picture that it has the artistic quality because it is life-like, or because it illustrates an interesting subject, so, too, the highest quality of our actions is a special one which neither their conformity to any principle, nor their most felicitous results, can explain. I don't know if any other word can be found for it but inspiration, which, in small things, we call tact. A conflux, a vortex—I can find no better term to express the pressure that bears on us from all sides, and by which our path is determined. This it is that we have to respond to at every moment, and the more sensitive we are to all its impacts, the more vigour there is in our step. No calculation of a general resultant direction, and no amount of steadfastness in adhering thereto, can stand in lieu of this unwearying freshness of response

and perpetual improvisation of resolve. Steadfastness of the right kind is the compounded effect of many dissimilar impulses actually at work. If we single out the point towards which they seem to tend, or any point of predilection, and speed there, moved by no other force than the direct attraction it has for us, our gait will never be that of a living creature. Oh, the people who have a formula and who stick to it ! Behold them passing across the scene with the serenity and deadly sureness of a stuffed animal seated on wheels and pulled by a string. Whom does our admiration go out to greet ? Not the perfect specimen of any single virtue, or the figure-head of any theory ; but the beautiful strong ones, in whose nostrils is the breath of life. Can we sum them up in a word or grasp them in a thought ? They are full of contradictions ; they glitter and change like chameleons ; they are all things to all men : self-affirming, ambitious, worldly, sensual, lawless and scheming ; and yet impersonal, disinterested, resigned and sincere, full of tenderness and sympathy, self-restrained, looking beyond. These are the living ones such as the good Lord made them. Will any one undertake to say what they go by ? They do not go by anything, unless it be by the sense of life which refuses to

be taken in tow by any demure handmaid of science or philosophy.

Probably the nearest approach to anything like a rule of life is to be found in the æsthetic instinct of the community, because no contradictions trouble it: it approves of wisdom and admires passion, and applauds success and bows to renouncement. It is braver than the doctors and the scribes. If we were to press it for its metaphysical yield, as we have pressed the religious and the civic instinct for theirs, it would lead us to admit as ultimate realities: dramas, the actors of which belong to fields that our classifications hold carefully distinct; and as the higher life: not obedience to any plan by which intellectual order can be made in nature or moral order in our hearts, but the activity of a direct, underived sense-of-many-pressures, a half-receptive half-creative sense, whereby we respond to and participate in these dramas. To be sure, I know nothing about them. It is characteristic of the data we select as ultimate realities that we are in complete ignorance concerning them, and it consoles me to reflect that religion knows nothing about God, since he escapes comprehension, and science nothing about her atoms, which are to explain everything.

What I can say is that analysis everywhere ends in fictions. God, and ourselves, and other persons' selves, and thoughts, and feelings, and deeds and results of deeds, and principles and passions, and private happiness and public weal—we have divided and sub-divided bravely the memories of life. But these terms which we hold carefully apart in categorical nicety, and yet compare incessantly in hopes that one of them shall be found in which they are all contained, or which shall enable us to dispense with the others—they are all blended in nature, involved with each other in knots of life; and whenever any one of them detaches itself from the cluster and drags us with it, so that we find the gist and reason of our existence in a single motive—be it spiritual, or social, or passionate—we are expelled from the organism, segregated. It is strange how rarely we understand that our separate conceptions can correspond to nothing in nature; that the fact of appearing as a distinct genus is a perfect title to the dignity of ghosthood; and that realities must be groups in which the most heterogeneous elements—so at least they seem in analysis—people, thoughts, events, and things are welded fast. The terms into which we have divided them are conceptual schemes, mnemonical devices, and nothing

more. The history of human error is the history of the attempt to find reality in one or other of these isolated terms—to bank with one of these houses. There is not one of them that will not suspend payment as soon as we draw on it for all we are worth. The individual is unreal: wherefore love is bankrupt. Have you never wondered in passing down a street how many houses it contains where at least one person has not staked his or her all on that venture, and lost? The community is unreal: wherefore the end of whole-hearted reformers is bitterness and confusion. The human species is unreal to the degree that the very word “philanthropy” evokes a smile, as the announcement of a farce. God is unreal: wherefore religion is bankrupt to those who have asked much from it. “*Lama sabachthani.*”

Not that each or any of these interests and objects of love will prove vain if we ask from it no more than what it offers: a satisfaction of a particular order. We are dealing, then, in the spirit of division with things divided. It is when we single out one of them to be our leading star; when, under the name of a ruling principle of conduct, we ask of the parts an entirety which is theirs only in joint estate, that their vanity, or ours, appears. This is a truth

familiar to the market-place. It has forced its way into popular adages reminding us that too much of aught is good for naught, or that it is not wise to put all our eggs in the same basket. It has fashioned itself into an unwritten gospel, orally transmitted from generation to generation—forgotten or despised by philosophers who search for a first principle, and moralists whose ambition is to discover in some major consideration the test of right conduct.

Practically we live by concessions to conflicting desires, by temperate participation in ideals that logically exclude one another, when we do not act by inspiration. In neither case are we steering by anything nameable.

Of course I see the difficulty that besets you here. What becomes of moral effort, of the desire to do better, to improve one's self and sometimes one's neighbours?

So unaccustomed are we to recognize any such thing as an architectural value in our desires, that most people, if told that the worth of moral effort is in the effort, and not in the guidance it can exercise, would be as profoundly discouraged as though they were invited to keep a man at the helm for the simple purpose of turning a wheel that did not connect with the rudder. But what if the simile be misleading,

and moral effort correspond not to the wheel but to the flag? The flag neither guides nor propels the ship, and yet may sometimes be the most precious thing on it.

Strangely enough these same people are more enlightened on neighbouring fields, and will often admit that the best prayers are those that ask for nothing. At times they will come even nearer to the truth on their own field, when they recognize that the amount of moral effort is more important than its results, and that a blameless life is often a poor performance in comparison with some, morally, far less spotless one. But they shrink from the inference. They will measure by the will and not by the deed, and yet are loath to confess the independence of the two. Yet its recognition would save many from discouragement or callousness, who see how little their conduct corresponds to their aspirations and who either hate themselves in consequence or renounce all effort. Let them prize it for its own sake.

Perhaps you will say that the strap cannot be so completely severed between moral endeavour and conduct, since experience shows us that often the one does affect the other. So it does; but how? If you have any talent of any kind you cannot with impunity restrain



it ; it clamours for employment, and as soon as you begin to exercise it, your whole organism is the winner. The activity of your moral being may brace to strength all the other members of the federation that is *you* ; the delicacy of the reactions that determine your conduct may be doubled thereby ; this does not prove that the finer reactions proceed from the nobler resolve any more than they do from your scientific or artistic interests. Moral effort animates and vivifies like any effort ; it does not fashion. Therefore, "What shall we go by?" is not the right question. Say rather, "What shall we love?" and the proper form of this question is : "Whom *do* we love?" The moral effort of a man shipwrecked on a desert island would be a love adventure with an ideal self ; and the increase of his activity resulting therefrom, would be due to the greater interest of the game, thanks to this companionship ; not to any fashioning power in his ideal. To him, of course, the question would be not *whom* but *what* shall I love ? But fancy him rescued and brought back among his fellow-creatures : shall he cling to his ideal as the only right one, valid everywhere and for all men, and go about in quest of people who will share it ? We meet them occasionally, these Robinson Crusoes, and

a good-natured world lionizes them for the sake of their goat-skin breeches and umbrella, of which they are not a little proud; a murmur of curiosity salutes them as they pass: "Look! that is a moralist." Let them pass. We who wish to be in touch with our fellow-creatures must reverse their proceedings; we must seek not companionship through a common ideal, but ideals through companionship. Men assemble for work, and for pleasure, and for war, for worship and for conversation; for many motives. I am not making a catalogue. In each of these cases, provided there be a feeling of sympathy, an ideal is formed; a yearning arises for some particular kind of prestige, and admiration salutes those on whom it seems to descend. But no one can live by any one of these ideals alone; nor can he make any one of them reign over the others without mutilating his integrity, for the logical developments of each of them conflict with the logical developments of the others. We do not all of us love the same persons, nor do the persons whom we love always love each other. Look at the many religions. Do you imagine that it is by their rules of life that religions have had sway? Assuredly not so, but by the persons they have given us to love. And, of course, each of us

has loved the person he wanted. Some have Krishna and others Mahomet; some have Jehovah and some the dear Madonna. There is a Scotch Christ and a French Christ, and there is one at Berlin that would make both the others open their eyes. This is as it should be.

The state of public opinion concerning morals is a wonderful spectacle. Everybody feels, and most people concede in ordinary conversation, that the doctrine of a higher spiritual or rational law, which we are at all times to obey, is—no less than that of a higher sociological interest, which we are at all times to consult—practically unapplied and inapplicable, mere talk. Yet it seems to be considered rash and anarchical to say so; better keep up the show and wink at each other, or smile quickly with a half-delighted, half-terrified sense of complexity. "Yes, I am wicked." I don't know if you are or not, but I wish I could bring you to see that, at all events, you are materialistic—as much so as Humphry.

To him the supreme reality is the social group, and what he asks for and judges by, is efficiency in that group. This you look upon as coarse, because it takes no heed of your spiritual wants, and brushes away as a cobweb the delicate fabric of the soul. And I sympathize with you. But

are you not repeating his offence (which is simply the crude illusion that supreme reality can be grasped in itself and identified with this or that) when you place your spiritual ware on high, like an idol, in conformity to which all our pottery must be modelled? Your great imitation of God is as flat and sodden as his great service of man.

Whereas I am pure from your sin, spotless and beautiful, because to me the supreme reality is an all-pervading, constructive force, only revealed in forms that are not its essence. Therefore we must not single out one of these forms and endeavour to make our various activities subservient to it or expressive of it. The value of each kind of work consists primarily in *not* being a translation of, or an adaptation to, some other kind of work, but an underived and special embodiment of the same force that is in them. I do not look for a law of conduct, to anything, but to a separate autonomous faculty. This, as you see, is very different from the anarchism of those who say there is no law, meaning thereby that we can deliver ourselves, hands and feet bound, to some favourite passion. Indeed, I should be inclined to send these doctors over to your camp; they, too, have determined and localized, once for all,

their supreme reality. But I confess that I consider it a great advantage of the view I am defending, that it takes into account and finds room for the rebellious element in us, that makes us violators of the law we deliver unto ourselves, or accept from above. Is it not the spirit of life warning us that we must always invent afresh, and earn daily, our bread? Part of this task is, doubtless, the framing of good resolutions. But, if our conduct is to be merely a rendering into acts of these vows, if it does not spring directly from the perception of a particular case with the discretion of tact, or the swiftness of inspiration, all I can say is that good resolutions are like bad ones: they are better broken than kept. This should console you for the difficulty of discovering what we ought to go by.

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## II. THE BACKGROUND.



# THE BACKGROUND.



## I.

I DOUBT if there be a more dangerous disease than the love of truth in those who do not instinctively understand that man's great business on earth is to build. The love of women, family affections, friendship, ambition, art, patriotism, religion—it is all building: nice little mud pies, altars or states. It is not imitating anything and it has therefore nothing to do with truth which pertains to faithful copies. Do you not see that in claiming truth for the doctrine you defend, whatever it may be, far from exalting, you lower the value it may possibly have? Far above truth, which is merely a particular relation of images to the things they mirror, is the reality of the things themselves, of whatsoever kind they may be—of our own thoughts among others—the relation of the



parts of a thing one to another, its structural virtue. It suffices for a statement to be true that there should be a test proof correspondence between it and the model of which it is for all practical purposes a picture. But your thoughts cease to have any importance as pictures the moment you begin to group them into coherent forms. They might at utmost be likened to bricks bearing each an image or part of a design, or some letters of an inscription impressed upon it. The edifice you fashion out of them cares little or nought for this ornamentation of its molecules; its coherency, its organic equipoise depends on proportions of form and weight which have nothing to do with the continuity of inscriptions or designs that cover each separate brick, and it is of these alone that truth can be affirmed or negated.

Do you imagine life is a problem set to us as puzzles are given to children who joint one little bit of wood to another till they have accurately reproduced the model! The child's answer is true or false because it need only copy. Our answers are the mansions of thought and feeling in which we must dwell, the shells that protect our flesh, part of ourselves as our very limbs, and they are neither true nor false: they are real or fictitious—organic or sham.

## II.

PRAISED be the gods, that something is left to eschew and hate! If not untruths, at least ghosts. There are detestable opinions.

Yet not such in themselves, not by their own merits or demerits. They are such by position and according to the group in which they figure. There is not a single opinion or belief that is not legitimate somewhere; not a passion or inward attitude that has not in some particular case the sanction of healthy reality. And in the same manner, there is no guest of the soul that is not sometimes a ghost.

People who take interest in thoughts start off in quest of truth and call themselves philosophers or students of philosophy. Other people err now and then, often or rarely according to the extent and delicacy of their perceptions. These people err systematically and uninterruptedly, for their very object is the mapping out of a general scheme in which values are determined once for ever. Theirs is the error of errors. And, in so far at least as the quest of truth is concerned, they and the moralists and the

theologians are all of the same stuff. I will accept your faith when you tell me where and by whom it must properly be rejected. I will admire and condemn the same virtues and vices as you do, when you point out under what circumstances they change places and pass from white to black. But when that day comes you will devote your talents to another pursuit and change your name. You will call yourselves seekers of the proper position, syntactists, or something of that sort. Perhaps more simply, observers.

The cause which I espouse, the thoughts that I love—what are they? Only a little flower in the great blossoming forth of mankind's thoughts and desires. The same views have been defended since men began to think, though the words are ever changing to suit the fashion of the day. Why, then, should I wish the cause that I defend to prevail against all others? Why should all men be silent that I alone may be heard? Surely the best part of every belief is the feeling that we hold it on behalf of the company and that we are called on to perform that part of the general task, just as our opponents are called on to perform another.

Let us be heedful of the community, the medium of living beings in which thoughts are

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produced. The effect of this perception, if strong and habitual, would be to transfer our interest from the contents of opinions to the conditions of which they are symptomatic. In which case we would cease to consider truth and turn our attention to vitality.

I am impeaching truth not before her own tribunal, but before that of life, and for myself will recognize no other court. Isolated and critical remarks of mine may be faithful representations, but I disclaim for the entire fabric of my thoughts the merit of correct images, no less than the imperfection of distorted ones.

### III.

YET there is something puzzling in this assimilation of thinking to the making of mud pies or other constructive feats. Of course, if imitation ceases the moment we connect our thoughts, philosophy and truth have nought in common. But does it cease? We all believe in scientific truths, in laws that express accurately, at least in the practical sense, the relations of phenomena; and science begins with connection. The knowledge of isolated facts is not scientific. Again, how often in our every-day life do we put two and two together and thus arrive at some knowledge that proves to be a correct image of previous, sometimes of future, events! Then why, in philosophical thinking, should observation and reflection be unable to give us any trustworthy information concerning man's nature and destiny? When we knew of Africa little more than the coasts, we were yet able to conclude from the presence of such streams as the Nile, the Niger, and the Congo, that in the interior snow-clad mountains would be found. If these rivers had run inland we should have

prophesied without hesitation the discovery of a mighty sea far back in the continent.

Even so with the great problem of our life. We study the streams and the shores, the perennial thoughts and desires of man, and the hard facts of his lot, and according to our own observations, or to the reports that reach us, we explain what we know by the mountains or the sea in the unexplored region; some of us believing in a God and some in a law, some in beauty and joy and others in malignant fate. Somebody is wrong, of course; perhaps we all are as yet. Are those alone right who say that geography must be limited to the coasts and that there is no heart of the land?

These were the objections I made to myself, and this the answer:

I have been alluding to that part—no inconsiderable one, of our thinking, which is conducted without any reference to space or time. It happens frequently that we are neither attempting measurements or determinations of form—nor giving a recital of successive events. We are working out logical or moral necessities and we give no heed to dimensions, shapes, or chronology; a beautiful independence, but also an immense impoverishment. These mysterious terms, these forms of space and

time, are the titles of registers, which, if opened, disclose an innumerable array of experiences and associations. The pressure of a vast surrounding is necessary for two impressions to appear to us as successive. Withdraw the surroundings, the deep bed of memories, and the ramification of echoes therein: events would seem instantaneous and neither prior nor posterior to any others; each would begin and end with itself immediately and for ever. There is no duration, no time for the simple-minded, nor for the man absorbed in one image. So, too, with space. For the object of our attention to appear extensive to us, we must catch hold of it with a thousand hooks, anonymous instruments whose history is merged at distance in the great dramas of sight and touch; break but a few of these little hooks and our sense of depth is gone; the eye will see all on the same plane, and touch will teach nothing; one of the dimensions has disappeared, and we shall need an entirely new map of the world.

Thus whenever we consider anything in reference to its connections in time or space, whenever we narrate or measure, we have a solid platform under our feet—we are starting in business with a large capital.

But we throw this capital away when we construct out of the harmony or discord of concepts, pure of space or time representations, an idea of what *must be*, or out of our moral aspirations an idea of what *ought to be*. Our thoughts are advancing thinly, all of a line, and we only regain the grip we have lost on reality when we call up an entirely new force to back them. Who can call idle fancies the thoughts that have been generated by the convergence of many minds? They are streams that sweep everything before them. And yet these very same thoughts are worthless when we think them alone! They must be thought in community; they have no basis to stand on by themselves; they are the will of the many; and our only visible relation to them, our only immediate action on them, is our submissiveness by which we induce them to pick us up on their way and bear us along.

Doubtless the opinion you profess may and should be your own, but it must be called for and necessitated by the thoughts of others. Failing which motivation it is valueless. The same with your moral efforts.

It seems to me that the moral question is generally treated in a very strange manner. We ask why we should behave in this way and not



in that. And some reply: because of the subtler delight. Others: because of the good of the community. Others, again, affirm that the reason is duty, and that the sense of obligation attends actions of which the maxim is a general law. While many say that the experience of centuries points out the right path and that the ill-advised or their descendants succumb in the struggle for life.

It is as though we were to explain eye-sight and hearing by the most interesting peculiarity—to us—of the things we see and hear. Eye-sight and hearing are functions of the physical organism which we possess severally. So, too, we have certain ideals, because they are functions of an organism that we possess collectively. We do not commend this or that because it is acceptable to the refined, or useful to mankind, or obligatory to our conscience, or backed by natural selection—in short, because it is right. It is right because we commend it collectively. Our common admiration is the voice of a desire that longs to assert itself, and the pleasure we take in well doing is primarily the delight of having maintained and refreshed the fraternity of approval. Our love does not follow goodness. Seek for goodness in her own right, in her own land, and you will find her nowhere. She is born

where the loves of many assemble. She follows happy crowds.

If I ask you how much you paid for your umbrella, I shall expect the truth from you. Truth has sway over umbrellas. They have a status in space, and a career—however brief—in time. But if I ask you your opinions on eternity or perfection, what I want in your reply is a certain temperature. I want a warm answer or a cool answer according to my constitution and to circumstances. I come to you for strength, and health, and radiancy, for a wave of personal magnetism, and I defy you to answer me in the unemotional, unaccented, matter of fact voice suitable to accurate statements, without looking like a fool or betraying by a false intonation the taint of pedantry.

#### IV.

I FIND that my scepticism is rooted in the desire for a much more intimate intercourse with nature than that of knowledge. Knowledge even within the lawful domains of truth, knowledge pure and simple, apart from the adventures that attend its discovery or its utilization, and judged on its own merits, is barren.

Observe discoverers : facts, unheeded by other people, little familiar facts, arrest their attention, as though a tiny alarm bell rang within them ; they store these warnings in their memory and are incessantly reminded of points where light is missing — troublesome, meaningless spots ; then a sudden thought, like the guess of a missing letter in a broken up inscription, makes order and sense. It is as though lamps that would not light separately had blazed up at the touch of a connecting thread.

If, perchance, you are one of these men you are much more than a man who knows. You are a poet and a creator. The facts were all there for anyone to notice, and many of them,

perhaps all, had often been noticed before. But the choice and the gathering of them together, whereby they acquire a meaning, this was not given from without; you received it not, you brought it; it is your contribution, your work. I have no quarrel with you, for with you dwells passion. But there is no fact or nexus of facts of which the simple knowledge imparted to me without some creative process on my part, would have the slightest value.

We are told that "knowledge is power." Knowledge is no such thing. Knowledge is one of the conditions, and a perfectly barren one by itself, of power. The utilization of knowledge is an act of synthetic nature and by no means an image of anything. A bit of information is fitted into the right place and forthwith we have power. Taken by itself this particular information has no greater value than any other; it has no miraculous virtue. But, placed as we have placed it, in a certain setting, it becomes the keystone of a bridge over some awkward pass. Its virtue is of the order of things architectural or syntactic, and not cognitive. It is not by an act of knowledge that we make use of knowledge; we can only do so by forcing it into a partnership which is on the field of practical activity, a creation of our own.

If we would render to Cæsar that which is Cæsar's, and not seek for fidelity of representations in the architecture of thoughts, our religious and moral beliefs would gain more than they would lose. The plastic power we give with one hand is more than the truth we withdraw with the other.

There is an objection worth noticing: so much of the work of the world is done by people who merely go because they are pushed, and merely know because they are taught, that in listening to the praise of inventive spirits we may fear a dividing of humanity into lords and slaves. If we believe in the value of knowledge we may differ as to whether it can be best imparted by science or religion, but at all events we can agree as to the advantage of imparting it. All men can participate more or less in it; some will be brilliant and others dull scholars, but no one need be wholly ignorant. We can all have a common pride in belonging to the same army, whether in the rank or the staff. But if knowledge is in itself valueless, so few people have the gift of discovery, and so few can even turn what they know to any account save the most humbly practical, that the best advised community would be one (thus it may be argued) in which the pursuit of material power—oftener

money than authority—were honoured above all other pursuits as the truly catholic effort. A few peculiarly constructed brains would be allowed to carry on in the interest of all the business of discovery. Save in the case of these few, the acquisition of learning, for other ends than the making of money, would be discouraged as a profitless vexation of spirit. So, too, a small number of philosophical poets might be tolerated who would deal with general ideas, as musicians deal with sounds. But with these rare exceptions, mankind would have to learn to do without any views, any beliefs, any aspirations. We come to the reign of positivism without the worship of science; of agnosticism without the creed of Evolution—for this, too, must be treated as a poem; of unmitigated atheism, the absolute reign of King Dollar, with a few artistic menials attached to his court for the enlivening of leisure hours.

These fears may be set aside. The day will never come when mankind shall do without beliefs, however valueless they may be as cognitions, and it would be foolish to desire that day. For the very same synthetic act which makes the value of knowledge in discovery and in practical application, is present under another form in the kindling of sympathy that makes

men rally round a common desire and a common hope. Discoverers are rare ; poets are rare ; even the materially successful are a minority ; but the gift of putting two and two together that enables this minority to group thoughts and facts, has a full equivalent in the catholic will that binds into groups not thoughts or facts, but human beings.

The great assertions that attend desires so general that generations can rally round them, though worthless as cognitions, have a peculiar value which is neither that of truth nor of art. Perhaps the best name for them would be myths. Doubtless the crowd mistakes them for truths and is ready to fight for them as such. But the crowd has a beautiful logic of its own and knows how to correct blunders by inconsequences. It will assert loudly that its religion is the only true one, and in the same breath affirm that every man should abide by the one he is born in. It will proclaim as an indisputable fact the superiority of its own nationality, and expect of every decent foreigner that he should do the same for his own country. Which shows that what the crown means by the word "true" is sacred, strength-giving, indispensable in a strong and rich sentiment of reality. And because this feeling of reality is contrasted with that to which

the individual has access by solitary experience, the propositions it prompts are framed in an obligatory, impersonal, non-subjective form which gives them exteriorly the look of truths properly so called. But the crowd discriminates instinctively, and when not goaded on by fanatics, sees nothing strange or offensive in the profession of a faith directly opposed to its own, for it vaguely understands that the same feeling, the same spirit, may be at the core while the expressions differ for local reasons. It will fight for its myth, but honour the foe who fights for his which it denies. The struggle is not between cognitions, but between groups of men.



## V

THE mistake of the age of faith was to treat its beliefs as truths. The mistake of our critical age is to rate them as mere symptoms of certain very important and very general subjective occurrences. Granting they have this value, and dismissing the question of how far such interpretations are arbitrary—for may not you and I explain the same myth or dogma by two different psychical processes? and how shall we know who is right? we have nothing to guide us but verbal analogies—apart, I say, from these reservations, it seems to me that the myth you have reduced to the state of a symbol, is little more than an empty husk. You offer me the allegorical picture of an inward event. But suppose the event to be authentic and most important, and suppose the allegory to be ingenious and apposite, this would yet entail no ardour of belief, no love. The event takes place, or can take place, in me; and your symbol expresses it metaphorically; there it ends.

A myth is believed in passionately, as though

a life depended on the belief, as though the belief made or co-operated in an existence, as though disbelief were—at least within the circle of those from whom the same faith is expected—an offence, a destruction, an attempted murder.

All that the symbolist can say to one who rejects his symbol is : “How comes this ? do you not see what it signifies, and how picturesquely it signifies it ?”

The lover of a myth does not even demand your assent unless it entail your love. He would not thank you for an admission such as : “Yes, I admit that there is a God, but he is not the object of the slightest interest to me ; and I grant that I have an immortal soul, but I do not care a farthing for it.” His belief is a civic action or passion, in which he wants you to participate ; not an allegory of which he begs you to notice the appropriateness.

For me to accept your symbolism, you would have to show me that the psychical adventures you turn to as the only realities that can be discovered behind our beliefs, take place not only in me, but out of me, so that by these thoughts and feelings I break down the barrier between myself and the reality in the midst of which I am plunged. Failing which, you leave me as poor as did your predecessors. They speak to

me of something which is purely without, and you of something which is purely within. The former I am supposed to be in communion with, by the knowledge I have of it as the scheme of the universe or will of God, and by my imitation of the models which it has pleased this scheme or this will to favour. I am not satisfied. It is not knowledge or imitation that I ask for. I ask for consubstantiality. I ask for the Real Presence without the wafer. What you offer me is the wafer in commemoration of my own presence ! I am equally discontented.

We see that we are brief apparitions, we rise for a moment and look around with a great yearning and in great perplexity ; we ask, Where is the seriousness of life, where the answer to our boundless desire ? Thereupon we are shown a picture book, and are either told to make faces according to the images therein, or we are advised, with a wink, that they are most respectable hieroglyphs expressive of the blind painter's wish that he had eyes to see. Where, then, is my contact, my commingling, my interpenetration with all that is around me ? I am cut off from it, isolated in the barren solitude of an evanescent subject, who projects into space an allegory of his own mechanism, or who glides in front of the great spectacle and sinks into nothingness, with

no other consolation than the thought that he has attempted to mimic a false image of it, cast on the screen of fictitious knowledge.

Fortunately our entire wealth does not consist in images of exterior facts and symbols of interior ones. Besides images and symbols there are desires. We are apt to think of desire as an interior fact, because it is usually attended by judgments, and to judging eyes everything is either out of self or in it. But, properly speaking, there is no object to a desire ; only to the judgments it brings with it. I am confronted with that which I perceive and judge. There is an object and a subject, a without and a within. I am not confronted with that which I desire : it is part of me, and I am part of it. Do we not see that people love without knowing it ? The desire is there, but in their consciousness it has no object, because their perceptions are still slumbering. And later, when they know only too well that they love and whom they love, they are yet unable to confront as a clearly exterior object the person whom they call the object of their passion. They try to step back a pace and judge the one who fills their heart : they cannot ; they feel that they are turning round to look at their own back. As far as their passion is concerned, they are moving in a world where

reality is neither exterior nor interior, but both at once—transcendental, in that it transcends the great opposition—absolute. All their judgments may be foolish; the queen of glory may be a poor little slut and the knight of the golden shield a sorry puppy, but these are trifles. And it is just the same in religion. Myths are the expressions, comely or grotesque, of collective desires.

Just as practically correct knowledge opens to us the world of space and time which we speak of as lying behind trustworthy images, even so our religious and moral beliefs are not entirely contained in us as purely subjective emotions, but have also a share of exterior validity. Not that, as in the case of trustworthy images, this share consists in the existence of outlying models or stimuli. Think of it rather as consisting in prolongations whereby we are in contact and participancy with a reality no less extra subjective than the perceptible world. This is the virtue of desire. The desire they contain is the sacred part of all our beliefs touching the right and the divine. The form they assume, the assertions they clothe themselves in, their intelligible content, is accidental, indifferent, almost fortuitous. It is their purely subjective part. All our truths, in the sense theologians and moralists attach to the

word, can be likened to the joy of a young lover who does not know exactly where he ends and where his lassie begins. Solomon in all his glory got less out of life than such a one who probably talks nonsense. And our heresies, moral or religious, are much of the same nature as Sabbath breaking in Scotland, or eating ham on the threshold of the temple of Mecca. They offend the law which is one of the disguisements of the common desire. Reasons may be ingeniously collected to show that the law could only be exactly what it is, and that no other law would deserve respect. They have about the same value as a metaphysical demonstration of some heinous discrepancy between the first day of the week and the mechanism of whistling. Thence perhaps the attractiveness of heresies of all kinds in the days of our bubbling youth. We like to show that we are not fooled by the disguise. We know that the shroud is a table cloth, and that the beard is made of hemp. Behold them, the mischievous imps—Babylon and Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon and the woman in scarlet who dwells on seven hills! They are dancing the mulberry bush round the law, and plucking at its skirts. The roar of their blasphemies rises as a gleeful cry: "It's not a goblin; it is only daddy!"

Desire is as precious as creative skill. Build me a cathedral, and I will not ask you if it is true, if it is a copy of anything and how accurate a copy. It is not an image that it should need some other reality behind it. It takes place at once among the forms that enrich the world, and you who wrought it need no other proof than its organic beauty that you have living roots in the soil whence all forms spring and by which all are united. But the man who cherishes a coloured print that he holds to be the image of the mystic arc in which is revealed the very plan of God—we who deny that there is any such arc, and that if there were any his print would at all resemble it, we treat him with signal injustice unless we recognize in his love and reverence the same affiliation to the soil, the same continuity of plastic power, as in your skill. His desire bridges the chasm between self and not self, and he thanks truth for what he owes to love.

## VI.

THIS at first sight seems distressing : beliefs owe part of their sociological virtue, part of their power of drawing men together, to a mistake. Men are not content without a common formula. We have no example of their gathering round a mere aspiration. Their desire frames itself into judgments, and what they fight for is often less their feeling, which is precious, than the assertion it prompts, which is valueless. The heart cannot work alone very long. With our feelings come judgments ; and as long as the former thrill in us, we trust the latter as true, *in some way true*. We cannot separate the two and wink slyly at the contents of our faith while glowing with its ardour. The lover forms to himself some image of his mistress : he may modify his judgment and yet retain his affection ; but his passion will not long address itself to an X. of which he admits that he can have no perception, no knowledge. In things of faith we do not ask for perception, but we ask at least for a valid opinion. We do not like to be told that our



aspiration is gold and our opinion tinsel, our target imaginary and our shot most commendable.

Yet it is so. The ascription of genuine truth to the contents, whatever they may be of faith, will always be a mistake. Faith is a desire which does not lead to true images as does observation ; and even were the images true to which it leads, its value would not be in them, but in the desire.

Well, what of that ? It is a fruitful error, and life cares little for logical rigour.

Doubtless, if beliefs had no other value than a sociological one, it might dishearten us to find that they owe this value to the images or judgments with which they are bound up, and which we cannot but recognize as erroneous. It would be civil war within us, war between the critical and gregarious instincts. Why do we know, or why do we congregate ? And which shall we curse : society or enlightenment ?

But there is no error in the fundamental desire that underlies beliefs. It gives no false information ; we can welcome it unreservedly. And as for its retinue of judgments, the inevitable body-guard, we can receive them, if not in the inner chamber, at least in the courtyard. In the abstract it matters little what they sing concerning Phtah or the Holy Virgin, if we have the guest we care for within ; and practically they are indispensable,

for by them we communicate with neighbouring castles and the lands at large. From this standpoint, without seeking for instruction in the words of their song, we have good reason to care what it is ; for, according to the tune and its burden, we are loyal vassals or outlaws. All depends on what is being sung in the neighbouring castles. Whatever it may be, if we fall in, it is the national anthem ; if we fall out, our voices will not pass the wall save as the sound of a revellers' chorus.

To those, then, who would loathe to be considered, or to feel themselves as outlaws, the words of the national anthem, orthodox opinions in things moral and religious, present themselves with all the force of a conclusion in a reasoning whose premises are unquestioned ; they are *cogent*, and in this sense true ; after which they come to be trusted as true in the other sense of the word, the scientific and every-day sense, to which they have no valid claim.

Thus there is in beliefs held in common, a virtue which is due to their community ; they are a joint estate, and we draw from them revenues which no one can touch, whose entire property is owned in severalty. But they are not unindividual merely because, like epidemics, they seize many men at once, and impress on them

all a similar stamp. This is their social virtue, one that the craving for complete plastic expression will always recommend to some extent, whatever its logical shakiness to the well-developed adult.

They have another and a greater one. The desire of unity, which is at the core of beliefs, binds man to man through erroneous assertions; it binds man to the universe without assertions, without error. It sends out vigorous lies that clasp the social stratum as roots hold sliding sands, and it strikes through this stratum silent tendrils that bathe and are fed in a torrent of universal life. If the depth and expanse of soil, that our feelings plunge into beneath the surface of individual consciousness, were limited to the film of humanity, I am not sure that we should have the right to take ourselves or anything very seriously; not much more so than in the poverty of separate selfdom, where the most refined form of wisdom is irony and a keen sense of the grotesque. Praised assuredly be comedy, in the dimple of whose cheek there is, perhaps, more counsel than in all the law and prophets! But her arms do not embrace us entirely. We are sometimes in earnest and yet not ridiculous. How could this be if we were nothing but dolls in the human puppet show? Napoleon used to

say that all private life, sad or merry, pertains to comedy, and that only nations tread cothurnate. This is seeking seriousness in size. Seriousness is elsewhere, children can be serious. How beautifully grave are the eyes of some of them ! the eyes of maidens on whom is the hush of dawn ! The simple thoughts and sensations that flower in their mind, strike deeper roots than ours, and spread silently through the universe. They are not in front of the stage, they are part of it, and of all that lies behind it. What they feel ends not in them, it ripples away to the stars on the wondering majesty of their looks. They are much more than fellow-creatures to us. They are pledges of the one-flesh-and-boneness of all things. We, the separate human beings, are like mountain peaks emerging out of the fog. The upper stratum of consciousness, wherein we appear to ourselves and to each other as distinct beings complete each in itself, is the clear air, beneath which we draw gradually nearer one to another in unformulate haziness, till we meet and are one in the deep, dark valley below, where are mingled—who knows how?—the soil of our common human plasm and the bedrock of the world.

## VII.

It is by desire and not by knowledge that we are part of the world, blended with its substance. Yet it cannot be said that all desires bespeak the universal consubstantiality. Often they bespeak the contrary : a fierce and selfish solitude. Watch two wee urchins begging eagerly for an apple ; one of them is charming and the other odious. The former is full of indeterminate longing, and he stamps in the delight and tremor of sheer desire. The apple is but a pretext, an occasion for the outlet of energy ; divert his attention to a toy or an animal, and he will covet them with equal ardour. His desire is great, but that part of it which is specified, attended by judgments, distinctly referred to definite qualities, is small in comparison to its unformulated depths. The boy pleases us because of the infinite possibilities of expansion of life that his impatient hands and sparkling eyes suggest. Desire in him is vast and fathomless, and the little wish of which he is conscious nestles on it as a gull on the sea.

There is nothing of this in the other boy.

He wants, and he knows what he wants; his want and his knowledge are co-extensive. There is no reserve of indefinite desire in him, ready to assume any form; no indefatigable, protean plastic power. Each of his desires is entirely contained in its conscious formula. Later, he will burn people who do not agree with him, if he gets a chance. There are no fluid depths of delight between his wish and his individuality; the one squats directly on the other like a duck on the mud. Boys such as this grow up and often have their will—on the mud. Sometimes, too, they have talent. They develop some technical skill which manifests in another way the same participation in the plastic power of the world, as does the silent reserve of joy in those who are its lovers. They join in the game by an architectural ability of some kind—failing which they are out of it, even when apparently successful. These, in whom it fails, are the gatherers of the worm-eaten fruit. By the texture of their desire they are doomed to disappointment. It is too conscious; it is all on the foreground. It is backed by no army of angels, to borrow an image of Christian mythology. "Give me a man who knows what he wants," said the ruler of a nation. He was

thinking of men of talent doubtless. Otherwise the Ruler of Life might reply: "And he will return to us in a few years as a dejected pessimist."

## VIII.

CAN the fund of unconscious desire be artificially increased within us? Many cordials have been tried: whisky and prayer meetings, Olympic games and choral societies with banners, and lectures on art or science with magic lantern projections. They are all useful in a small way, and deleterious too; and none of them acts long. There does not seem to be any quick and sure way to moral plenitude.

Of all attempts the most desperate on record is asceticism: shut the outlets and the tank will fill. Alas! you have got into the cask and crushed through the bottom while stopping the bung. No longing is so narrowly specified, so barrenly conscious as the longing for unconscious wealth; no desire so furiously selfish as the wish to annihilate self.

It is the texture, not the object of our desires that matters. Grant that we could make out what that texture ought to be and desired it alone: forthwith it has become an object and lost its virtue. We might as well attempt to



paint nothing but a background ; it would pass to the front.

Let it not be inferred that restraint is valueless. Restraint is necessary and delightful. It hushes the childish cry : " Give me what I want or I shall die "—wherein is expressed, even as in the ascete's prayer, the conviction that what matters in desire is its object. Restraint is an act of homage to the unformulated—provided it be not itself cast in an iron formula. It must be adapted to temperaments, variable according to the variable forms of desire, and such as to hinder, as *little* as possible, the most natural and instinctive form thereof in a given individual ; as much as possible his factitious or immature impulses. The acceptable sacrifice is that of the instincts we have not got but think we would like to have ; the sacrifice of imaginary pleasures. The acceptable restraint is that of the faculties with which we are poorly gifted. Similarly, the best observances are those in which we can display an inborn mastery. An abstemious, lyrical race like the Arabs will fast and pray. In Roman Catholic lands the chief virtue is intellectual submission, because the genius of the Latin races is not speculative. Most Protestants prize chastity above faith ; you may doubt, you may even deny, but you must keep your arms

away from waists. "*Sera Venus*," said Tacitus of their ancestors. The different forms of restraint seem very funny from the distance of a few hundred miles. Why not drink, why not discuss, why not embrace freely? Because there is a forbidden tree in every garden of Paradise, the one in plucking whose fruit we look most awkward. You of Arabia, you must not drink, because you don't know how to pass round the cup; you have not the gift of convivial mirth. You of the Mediterranean, you must not think, because abstractions turn to gall in you and to barricades in your streets. You of the Northern Seas, you must hide the pleasures of sex under the duties of marriage, because you are a young race and have only just found out the mysteries of generation; they make you blush and look silly; you have no ease of manner; you are too juvenile; you must wait. People to whom the flesh is sinful are people in whom the flesh is immature. We are all of us immature in some point; and all these various restraints have the same excellent reason: Do least what you do worst. They make for expansion, not for asceticism.

## IX.

As with desires, so with thoughts. The more we have of them the better, provided the reserve corps be proportionate.

Watch two men professing the same opinion : they are like the two urchins begging for an apple. One of them repels us. He has staked all he is worth on one card, all his army in one battle. For the moment at least, he has no troops marching to back him ; he is entirely on the field, and this is his last levy. If it fall he falls with it ; he has made a personal question of his opinion. It is as though all depth of tissue were worn away in him, and nothing remained but a thin, exasperated, hypersensitive film between your objections and his life's blood. You must think as he does or take his curse.

The other man speaks perhaps exactly the same words, but he speaks them otherwise. He defends the same field with the same arguments, but compared to his total strength they are but a mere outpost, a picket by the bivouac fire ; behind them in the dark you hear the

sentry cries of a large army. He has powerful interests peacefully slumbering, which he knows he can wake in a minute should he need them ; thoughts innumerable, which he has not chosen to summon, and ideas that have come unsummoned, not to take part in the fight, but to stand round for the fun of the thing. His flashes of humour are rockets that signal the presence of these unemployed forces.

If these two men have perchance the logical turn of mind that leads one to recognize the theoretical basis on which one stands, they will tell you, the former that what he believes is true at all times and for all men, true in the scientific and ordinary sense of the word—wherefore your opposition irritates him as an act of stubborn malice ; the latter, that the truth of beliefs consists in a local and variable necessity. He knows what he must think, but he sees no obligation for you to think likewise. He does not abstain from opinions, nor accepting them, treat them as mere poetry. He is not an atheorist ; he believes and accepts his belief as true at a given time, in a given place, for a given group of men. No such shades of meaning are intelligible to the flat-brained. According to them man has a soul or he has not ; God exists or does not exist, and if He exists it is not here and

there and now and then, it is once for ever. In all things it is yes or no, facts or lies.

Certainly; on the foreground. But if we are content with the thoughts that occupy this position on the field of attention there is no need for religion or anything akin. Science and the ordinary business knowledge—the less subjective the better—will suffice; they speak by yes or no because they deal with points on which attention is focussed and which are in the full glare of affirmation or in utter darkness out of it; points exteriorized by our attention itself, and opposed to us as objects by our very manner of looking at them. It is inattentive thought, it is all the tract of mental scenery around each focus of attention, that is giving warning of itself in our myths. If they were true as cognitions they would have lost the virtue that makes them indispensable to us. We must neither reject them nor mistake their local necessity for straight up and right down truth.

To try to do without them is to fall into the ascetic error. The ascete sees that things desired have not the value we suppose while coveting them, and he abstains. The atheist sees that our beliefs have not the truth we generally credit them with while believing, and he denies. Life is no less mutilated by this

furious love of foreground truth than by the insane rejection of all human desires. A society organized on the basis of hard facts would give just about as complete an expression of the total wealth of our nature as the most bigoted community. Perhaps we shall see this return of old things under a new name. The Stylites have had time to descend from their pillar and change their clothes. They are coming back as doctors of medicine and professors of secular socialism. We shall be made to gargle as we were forced to worship. We shall be assembled for purposes of disinfection instead of for psalm singing—with much the same profit. Our daily task will be set to us as to little boys; we shall chop straw again like the children of Israel in Egypt, and the hand of the state will be heavier than Pharoah's.

How often must it be said, or who shall say it so clearly that it need not be incessantly repeated: we are not simply in presence of the world, we are part of it. It is not merely the object and we are not merely the subject. This relation constitutes a very small part of our mutual involvedness, a speck on the surface of consciousness—a good useful speck, as firm as a rock, with just room on it for the little garden of truth under the light-house of reason. But it is

not by knowledge, it is by co-creation that we fill our measure, and by far the greater part of our task is done long before there is a subject in presence of an object and a truth to be spoken of in the reactions that ensue. Behind the thin surface of reason we are substantially continuous with the pre-rational; and our impoverishment, our loss of depth, is equal whether we reject the beliefs in which this diffused thought-matter models mythical forms, or, accepting them, treat them as statements of facts.

If, then, the atheorist falls into the same error as the ascete, the literalist—I mean one who does not distinguish between ordinary truth and religious or moral necessities, nor instinctively recognize the local and variable character of these—the literalist is in this precisely on a level with men in whom desire is coarse and joyless, whether they achieve it or not, because they have none other than the one they are conscious of—they have no wealth in reserve. Neither has he. He has no other faith than the one he is conscious of, and which holds entirely in its formula. He has simply suppressed the background. His desires may be of the right texture; grace may abound in his daily life; in thought he is a dense materialist, however spiritual the tenour of his doctrine.

Nor can symbols suffice. Herein is the short-coming of symbols : we are referred to interior, to subjective facts as to ultimate and sufficing realities. But a purely interior fact, a wholly subjective performance, deserves very little respect unless it be a marvel of ingenuity and constructive skill, in which case there are a thousand chances to one that it will clothe itself in some material—stones, colours, words, or such like—and cease to be purely interior. Certainly feelings, states of mind, beliefs, which are anything but marvels of ingenuity and claim on the contrary the privilege of being accessible to all, would have little to boast of if their value were a purely subjective one. What importance, what seriousness is there in the fact of my feeling perfectly happy, if my feeling stretches no further than myself, begins and ends in me, and is part of nothing out of me ? I might as well be chewing opium. Perhaps I am. And what difference can it make to me or anybody that I should be perfectly miserable, if that be all there is of it ? It is like having a nightmare and knowing that you can wake when you choose. Can I not put an end to my dream as soon as I am tired of it ; can I not blow out my stupid brains with the greatest ease and dispatch ? Then if merely subjective happiness and merely



subjective unhappiness are such poor little soap bubbles—things for babies to laugh or quarrel over—how much lighter still were beliefs having a purely subjective value !

Neither a purely interior reality nor the knowledge of an exterior one can be of much avail. There is no co-operation in the latter, and nothing to co-operate with in the former. So long as we oppose the subject to the object and seek our wealth in the adventures of the one or the cognizance of the other, we are equally poor, equally cut off from all that surrounds us, excommunicated. Knowledge is no communion. The substance is not in its image, nor consubstantiality in knowledge. The ever to be revered Socrates said: "Know thyself." A quaint conceit considering I am not worth knowing and knowledge is not worth having. Things must have changed since those days. For my part I should find the game of life a very small one if I did not think that my individual separateness is only skin deep, that my apparent contrastedness to all that seems not me, ceases beneath the stratum of perceptions and judgments; that insideness and outsideness have no meaning for my greater self, whose most intimate affections are part of the flesh of the world. Nor do I see how without

the admission that this great antithesis of subject and object is a merely local phenomenon, we can legitimate our confidence in either. All we know of our surrounding is the reaction of our organs: we are cast back on them. But they are inconceivable and could never have been evolved without the surrounding of which we have just been forced to say that it is to us what they make it. Which, then, shall we trust? Which pre-exists and determines the other? The difficulty vanishes if we look upon their separation and opposedness as the product of a special and highly elaborated kind of reaction. In reality the thing perceived and the perception of it are simultaneous growths, part of the same process. Not that my perception of the world creates the world. With the mass of things perceptible we must compare the mass of entire perception present and past, with all actions all reactions, with the sum of stimuli the sum of stimulata. The world at every moment of its history has comprised an equal amount of both. Simple provocations have met with simple responses, as in mechanical or chemical processes, and the provocation and the response are part and parcel of the same process. Question and answer are hand in hand with no gulf between them. The questions become more intricate, and a new kind of answer makes

its appearance: perception, more complex than all other responses but forgetful of the past; for it contemptuously confuses all previous actions and reactions, and huddles them together into the camp of the stimuli; it treats its own specific reaction as the only one, ignoring the fact that there is as much stirred or interior as stirring or exterior activity, as much subject as object in the drama from which it segregates itself and which it calls the outer world. Save in the one little smithy where images are forged there is no interruption, no contrast between us and the universal drama; we are part of it and it is part of us; the limit line cannot be drawn. Yet nothing can be thought or said without the help of the smith! . . . . A great darkness wherein all is merged in unity; some millions of little workshops twinkling in clear separateness; and between the darkness and the isolated hearths, the twilight of the robes of myths, moving hither and thither, striving to collect as a flock the scattered fires and lead them together across the darkness, like the stars of the milky way. They are not symbols; they are not messages. They are messengers who speak by gesture. They are intermediary forms of life, in which thought is action, and sensation melts into reality.

## X.

SUPPOSE we were to agree about spirit rapping and table turning. This would not constitute a myth unless our agreement served as an outpost to an unformulated desire in which the separate-ness of you and me were forgotten. The same holds of a religious creed, of a moral law. That opinion, creed, or law is the right one in accepting which I am not actuated by my individual judgment but am borne along by a force that seems to me exterior, and am liberated from solanimity or from the mere concordance of my mind and yours ; the opinion, creed, or law behind which is the desire that makes us consubstantial.

It would be careless and inaccurate to speak of self-renouncement as essentially characteristic of the acts or states of mind in which this continuity of substance is realized. On the one hand, it is true, there is in them an emancipation from one's usual consciousness that fades into insignificance ; but there is in them also a sense of grandeur, of reality, of power, of certitude and

of importance that nothing can equal. And this it is, not happiness which may or may not accompany it, that we ask of our myths, our strivings and our moods. We cling to our sorrows as tenaciously as to our joys, and try to make the most of them ; we cling to our passions even when they give us nothing but suffering, and we expect nothing else from them. Our great craving is for importance, a secure importance that can dispense with the doffing of bonnets; and we return ever and ever to the field, sun-lit or storm-beaten, where it awaits us. Many have invited us to court altruism and philanthropy. It is again the old error of dragging the back-ground to the front and thinking it will give depth as before. You may love your fellow-creatures and be as flat as a wafer. You may feed the hungry, clothe the perished, nurse the sick, and yet pass on the surface of life as a shadow on the wall. There are some such who frankly admit it. You will hear them say : " Nothing ails me except that I am dead. I see, and walk, and talk ; speak to me and I will answer. But nothing affects me, nothing interests me. I am as a doll that has been wound up by a clever mechanic ; yet a few days or a few years, and the wheels will have ceased to turn. They might stop this minute

for ought I care. My surface only is alive and none of the faint ripples that crease it reaches me in the depths of my desolation."

How should it ? There is the same mistake in pursuing good-will and unselfishness directly as in assigning ordinary truth to religious or moral beliefs. These are plants that flower in the shade and wither in the full glare of consciousness. Appoint the supreme belief that is to unite us ; choose as aim self-sacrifice : it is all in vain. Communion is in the desire that comes next, that will never be lit by attention nor spoken save as in song.

## XI.

EVEN as there is no continuity of substance in knowledge, so, too, is there none in imitation. They both offer images in place of reality. An actor does not become a king or a traitor for mimicking them. No more do we gain in aught but histrionic ability by the most scrupulous imitation of a model, human or divine. Histrionic morality should be confined within its proper bounds : good manners and criminal law, against both of which it can teach us not to offend. The law of the land and the rules of custom are the object matter of a good and genuine knowledge, as much so as the laws of nature. It is no real serious flaw in morality that the judgments on which it rests should not be originally of the order of those that can properly lay claim to truth. Consensus has gradually raised them to the dignity of things objective.

If many archers shoot in the same direction a real target will be formed in course of time by the bed of arrows. Think as you will of the

genesis of those supposed facts or laws, the knowledge of which we call moral truth—say, if you like, that primarily we drew them from ourselves and received them not from without, as we receive the impressions of the physical world, say that the work has been done for us by our ancestors, yet it has been done, and there it stands as solidly and objectively as the earth we inhabit, and like it a matter of knowledge or error. It has been precipitated by thousands of generations like a bar at the mouth of a mighty river; it has become the goal towards which we may tend, or which we may ignore; we, the solitary rivulets wandering among the rocks and reeds, but who yet partly shape our course by our wishes and ideas. Primitively the bar was in the river, and the river in the brooks. To-day it is as independent of me, poor little rill, as the sun and stars under which I flow, and if I can have any useful knowledge of them, so can I too of it.

After all are not those impressions which we trust unhesitatingly and look upon as the proper realm of truth, trustworthy merely for the same reason that can be invoked in favour of moral truth, so called? The evidence of the senses has finally no other sanction than the agreement of all men. The few people who venture to



dissent—in practice—are quickly and safely disposed of. If they persist in taking chairs and tables for red mice, we know where to put them. Simply because they are unfortunate enough not to find anybody who can share their view, and ultimately for no other reason. Their case is pathological because they are refractory to the general agreement. If their error, their incapacity to recognize the truth in the domain of perception, consists in a stubborn dissent, must we not respect as a practical equivalent of truth any permanent agreement of the entire community such that to reject it is to be ostracised from every city; or any local agreement, the contempt of which would banish us from the city where we wish to dwell?

Discussions are ever arising concerning the value of morality, its general sameness or local variability, its efficacy or its importance. There is an old and bitter quarrel between the champions of the letter and those of the spirit, who are not likely to agree for a long time. For the former are thinking: "How shall we avoid being expelled from the city?" and the latter: "How shall we defend ourselves against the encroachments of municipal life?"

The ordinary civilized being is nauseated by pious or moral advice. We resent exhorta-

tions to lead a good and holy life, and are tempted to look upon the adviser as a mealy-mouthed rascal or a boor. He may be neither; he may simply have lost his way and be slumming in the wrong place. We should remember that ugly things happen. People are cut up and packed in trunks. Children are maimed and farmed out as cripples to excite the compassion of alms-givers. Women are beaten to death. There is a race of men that we have difficulty in understanding; the working of their minds is not as ours. The art of turning their thoughts into another channel, which certainly would seem desirable, cannot be argued out; it must be discovered by experiment and tested by practice. If we dwelt among bush-whackers, angel-makers, bullies and ruffians, we should not smile contemptuously at givers of good advice; we ourselves would be in their ranks. A good and holy life is no thing to be laughed at in a community of cut-throats; it means something very simple and true: the respect of certain fundamental conditions of intercourse and commerce between human beings—the opening of the market. We have wares innumerable: spices, and perfumes, and graven images, cunning works of love, toys of delicate fancy, that we cannot exchange nor even fashion with due care

in the midst of habitual blackguardism. Indeed, this is what we mean by evil: the thwarting of industry and commerce, in the wider sense of these words.

But a good and holy life means something very different when preached to people who have not the slightest wish to murder, or steal, or bully their neighbours, or so much as wound anybody's feelings—ordinary, well-brought up, urbane people. It is surely not taking too optimistic a view of humanity to assume that there are many such. Everybody is not longing to brain someone with a poker, nor struggling against the temptation to forge a signature. Heredity and education have caged us in a network of obligations to which we submit as willingly and lightly as to the rules of personal cleanliness or tolerable grammar, and neither the commandments nor the habits of mind most suitable for the amending of potential convicts, can be of much interest to us. Which does not mean that we are angels. We may be poor creatures in our way. We may be lazy, vain, greedy, frivolous, pedantic, sentimental, self-conscious, touchy, hysterical, torpid, snobbish, querulous, dogmatic, incoherent and morbid—to mention but a few of our possible shortcomings. Even if we have them all, a good and holy life is the last thing we

ought to desire; it would only aggravate our defects. The invitation that the words convey is that we should conform ourselves to a model—and our sin is lack of spontaneity. We are  
X . bidden to the imitation of some master, while the sense of reality escapes us because we are poor in invention. The legitimate domain of duty is no longer the one on which our interest falls; it has no real problems for us; our ancestors have struggled with them and solved them long ago; the answers lie ready in our muscles, unconscious, automatic. Of course, new rules can always be assigned, new tasks set by the indefatigable spirit of duty. There is no end to the harrowing of self. But these tasks are harmful; Psyche is made to chew the prickly cactus and swallow broken glass like a howling dervish; and these rules are false, falser and falser, as a refracted ray of light deviating ever more from its original direction, the further they are prolonged out of the atmosphere of legality into that of grace.

It is well to be led by the spirit of imitation when the aim of our endeavour is the good-will of our guild. And mankind, or that part of it in which we are interested, practically forms one great guild in so far as the fundamental necessities of human commerce are concerned. Its

rules are hard realities ; their mutual character, their gradual precipitation as the common residue of millions of experiences prolonged throughout ages, have made them objects of knowledge and of submission as distant and passionless as the laws of the physical world.

But it is not the good-will of the human guild, nor even that of a narrower one such as a given circle of society, that the ordinary civilized being feels himself invited to court when subjected to moral exhortation ; for the gates of the town and the doors of his friends are already open to him. It is a solitary, intimate, spiritual perfection that he is bidden to seek. He is asked to awake to the life of the soul. And the supposed necessary condition thereto is that he should accept a code of observances ten times more punctilious than those that proceed from the necessities of gregarious life. He must bow to a new and severer law. Now the soul thus conceived as a thing of conformity is a product of the error that assigns objective reality to myths and ordinary truth to the propositions that assert them. A type pre-existent and susceptible of imitation, a God objectively real, would have the same kind of value as a bit of chalk or a book of statutes and regulations : something to study and something to conform our conduct to ; a thing to look at

X  
and copy, not a thing to be. The value of myths is, that in and by them, we move in forms of life prior to the focussing of attention which creates and reveals objective reality while opposing us to it as subjects restricted henceforth to knowledge and imitation. Forms of life just as real as the objective ones when not mistaken for these. Every deep sensation oversteps the borderland, ends in impersonal pantheistic moods where there is no distinction between being and feeling, and where to think is to create. But the focusing of these moods, their gathering together into one subject whose perfection is sought in his conformity to an ideal type, immediately destroys the communion, the continuity of substance, the fusion of me and not me, that alone made them worth having. You tear up and kill the stalks of wheat that you gather into sheafs. My spiritual virtues are dead the moment they are mine, and they are mine the moment I stand in presence of a model. They flower and play about in the wind before the making of the sheaf, before the hour of integration that cuts off and opposes. They are all in moments of oblivious enchantment, in flashes of consubstantial joy that exclude the very thought of imitation.

## XII.

THE thoughts chronicled in the preceding pages might be wrought into the shape of a thesis. The reader would have the satisfaction of knowing all the time where he was going and how far he had got on the road. There would be headings and sub-headings: Part I., Part II., and Part III. A proposition to be demonstrated, a list of objections stated and disposed of, a rapid sketch of the consequences to be drawn from the victorious doctrine, and finally, a hymn in honour of the rejuvenated destiny of mankind. Unfortunately it would all be artificial. It did not grow like that. Are you not weary of the lecturer's trick? Who ever thought thus in didactical sequence? There is a fundamental vice of insincerity in the doctrinal presentation of thoughts. We observe, and talk, and read; ideas pass as a crowd under our window, or we descend into the street and mingle with them; and soon we count among them friends and foes. There are some we join the moment they appear, leaving everything to stroll with them arm in arm. Others seem to us so

ridiculous or so odious that we wonder they are not ashamed to show themselves. All this is part of our individual destiny; it means that we have become citizens of Verona and side with Capulet or Montague. It does not mean that blue caps are lovable and red caps infamous, which is the abstract formula of every doctrine. The reason of our judgments is intimate, personal and passionate; detached from this reason they are ghosts in ghostland. Out of conversation thought is mutilated. It is like a limb torn away from an animal and taking to grow on its own account—a lizard's tail waxing mighty without any lizard attached to it, an enormity. It is hard to believe this of contemporary thinkers whose fame fills the air. Yet their works are as lifeless as the folios that moulder in our libraries and were once revered as the masterpieces of human intellect. Who reads Albertus Magnus or Guillaume d'Auvergne? Plato still holds because he loved Socrates who used to chat with Aspasia and sup with Alcibiades and Aristophanes. Descartes' little book is still charming because he begins by telling us that having learned all that was taught in his day, he found it worthless, and set forth to look around him at men and women.

Writers have ignored this. The notion has gone abroad that thinking is like kite-flying. The



further away from him the toy soars the better pleased is the little boy who holds the other end of the string. We have been treated to formulas that explain everything from cosmology to cosmetics. But where are the human beings whose true wants and desires, even the most purely intellectual, ever ran in these straight lines? If such there be, who has heard them converse and not fled?

The thinking creature has been forgotten and his thoughts cut into slices. The many selves, some clear, some shadowy, that look over each other's shoulder into the mirror of conversation, have been brushed aside. Topics have been chosen and isolated; problems have been torn from the quick, and the unity, the completeness that belongs to the minds from which they are cut, has been sought for in the illimited inflation of these severed limbs.

And I who cry.shame am a sinner.

Who is in need of a book? Who cares for logic and consistency? Not life surely, and surely not the living. Only a few specialists, whose knack it is to discover particular stand-points from which a limitless number of opinions or facts seem to dovetail one into another, but who are invariably irritated by all

such standpoints save the one they personally patronize. Whereas we are all of us in need of thoughts and feelings, as much so as of food; the craving to meet them is half of our total desire. It is in quest of them and not of systems, that we scratch about among the people around us and in the dust of centuries.

There is a man in Geneva who has spent thirty years of his life and all his little patrimony in constructing a tin model of the town, such as he fancies it was in the fifteenth century. It is as big as a good-sized room and most elaborate. Yet, strange to say, nobody seems anxious to buy it, and the poor devil is starving. How many of us have been working for years at a city of God in tin! Some of us—you, perhaps—have succeeded; and there it is—perfect, carefully dusted and dead. Silent for ever and not particularly needed. Very kindly, very politely you will be asked not to stand in the way; foot by foot you will be pushed into the lumber-room, you and your city of God, the masterpiece and its custodian. There will be visitors sometimes: people with spectacles and a book under their arm. O the fresh flowers in the market-place, and the girls tripping down the street!

Have you watched emigrants disembarking

from strange countries? To learn anything from them you must get hold of them the moment they land, while they still wear the national clothing, sing their mountain airs, tell stories of the past, walk in their own traditions. The next day it is too late. They are decked in a second-hand frock coat and a greasy silk hat; they have forgotten their native language, they retail comic anecdotes from the newspapers, and whistle music hall ditties. They have gone into business, and all they care to tell you is how they are getting on in the rag and bone trade, or whatever career they may have chosen in order to turn an honest penny and contribute to the national wealth.

It is just the same with thoughts. They disembark from the unseen world and you fancy they bring tidings. So they do for a minute; fresh genuine news, redolent of distant heather; glimpses of a soul. A moment later they have vanished; they have bred and multiplied and their place is taken by a new generation, eager to make its mark in the rag and bone trade of philosophy. There is no substance in the sequels of thought. There is nothing to be learned from these prosperous colonists; they have lost their homestead lore, which is all they had to tell us. You must turn away from them

and wander from wharf to wharf at the hour  
when the ships arrive, and make friends with  
none but new-comers, if you wish to know the  
fatherland.

### XIII.

THE day may come when we shall be very wise. If so, we shall emancipate ourselves from systematic unity, even as we have shaken off the shackles of scholastic demonstration. We shall simply say what we like and dislike; which thoughts appeal to us and which rile us. We shall mark with little signs, as points pricked on a map of the skies, our favourite abodes, and our stations of bad remembrance.

These dotted charts are our genuine records. The rest is sham and self-deception; laborious attempts to prove that our various likings are logically inseparable and obligatory for all men. We shall not be judged by such arguments, but by the dignity or meanness of the plan on which we are constructed.

Mark your constellation and hand it in. Without knowing it, you have pricked a design, one of the schemes on which human beings will be fashioned until the end of time—the formula of your structural immortality. The names of the halting-places you have marked will be

changed the next time you are born, but their relative positions and the outline they form will be the same; and though you will not know yourself again, you will feel as one who has been through it all before and cannot lose his way. The friends of the world are those whose abstract figure has been received into consciousness; indeed, this is all we can do by thoughtful sincerity: conquer or reclaim title-deeds of eternity.

Our arguments prick no figure on the heavenly vault, they follow no organic type. They move in artificial symmetry, in straight lines or concentric circles; little arrangements in one drawer of the brain, classifications of images according to a principle about as plastically active as the order of the letters of the alphabet: that of conceptual congruency.

Compel the living animal to speak from the quick, and he will say things to you that do not rhyme logically, that neither hook on one to another like the links of a chain, nor apparently converge as the spokes of a wheel towards any hub of which he or you can be aware. And yet they belong together and converge, but the focus is out of any possible scheme of doctrinal unity. It never can be formulated; the spots of life it connects belong to different strata, whilst the

lines that meet in an intellectual focus are drawn on the intellectual plane. There is no resemblance between the conquest of a complete consciousness (the work of sincerity, of daring, of humility), and the arrangement of some of our preferences into systems that we try to impose as necessary and general.

But this is a quarrel with philosophers—perhaps a cry of repentance. Fortunately few people pay much heed to apparent consistency. The majority are bravely inconsistent. They have a theory, and live quite irrespectively of it. It is harmless. Impartial examination shows that the acceptance of a consistent systematic doctrine of life and the willing recognition of a general law, is a good sign in most people. It does not interfere with their natural reactions; it merely equips them with a new and occasionally useful one. They are readier for all possible emergencies, and the possession of this new talent may even add to the ease and sureness with which they exercise the others. Their robust, thoroughly pagan brains defend them against the tyranny of logic. Just as they have a day in the week for going to church, so they have a little box in their mind in which they can safely pack any amount of doctrine. It will keep within limits. They have merely acquired

a new sympathy, learned a new game, picked up a new slang, found a new topic of conversation. They can resist the formula of evolution with its homogeneousness and its heterogeneousnesses and its concomitant dissipations. It will not trouble them much in business, pleasure or politics. Some of them will gravely expound to you the most appalling theory of life ever conceived, and you shudder, wondering how long a human being can writhe under the grip of so hideous a nightmare. At the same time, almost in the same breath, they lay down a law of love and gentleness and pardon, and tears and suavity and grace, so sweet, so ladylike, so emollient that you fear all strength must have melted from them in these angelic dreams.

Peace! be not alarmed. All is well. These children of perdition, these creatures of an hour wending their almost hopeless way over the thin crust that separates them from eternal fire, be not too sorry for them. While yet you wring your hands they will put down their burden of sins for an hour's comfortable gossip. The flames that dart out under their feet, with a smell of roasted flesh, as the theory tells us, serve apparently in practice to keep the kettle warm for tea and hot Scotch. These meek ones will trample on their foes and exterminate races. These



lilies of the valley weave cloth and exchange stock. The little feet that demurely trip to church will keep time to the rhythm of waltzes, the hands that were clasped in prayer will applaud the pantomime, the eyes that are to behold the seven candlesticks will feast meanwhile on the looking glass, and the lips that murmur "Good Lord, have mercy," hunger nathless for stolen kisses.

Make yourself easy about them. These are well-made minds, neatly divided, firmly partitioned, articulate, beautifully decentralized, and yet all working together in a unity which eludes verbal definition, but makes the race of strong animals that impose their sway on the world. They can receive and withstand any amount of moral exhortation. It all tumbles into the same drawer and never gets any further. They have a place and a time for all things. These sons of Wotan and daughters of Hercules can with impunity accept the law of God for it has no general sway over them; they bow in silence to a hundred altars and reserve this one for verbal effusion. It does not much matter what teacher they applaud; they forget him the next minute and act as their muscles expand.

But these same teachings are poison to others. The fierce protestation of certain natures against

exhortations to goodness, their pleasure in sceptical or cynical remarks, the flippant tone of the drawing-room, the dare-devil tone of the tavern, the horror which the artistic-minded feel for the holy, earnest people: all these symptoms of worldliness, to speak as the Church, are simply the praise of organic unity. These persons are protecting their inward partitions. They have no staunch compartment ready in their minds for moral or religious or philosophic thought; if poured into them it will act as a corrosive, destroying the membranes of their different cells and melting everything into one same offensive jelly—a nauseous pietistic or rationalistic pulp.

Surely it is a mistake to compare “opinions,” as we usually do, one with another; or doctrines, or behaviours, or feelings. We are as yet in darkness. We have no precise knowledge of the different types that legitimate different thoughts and different actions. Perhaps our nearest approach to any such knowledge—and what a poor attempt!—is a dim recognition of national traits: “You must not judge an Italian like an Englishman,”—with the tacit assumption, generally, that one of the two—the other one, which ever you may be—is an inferior animal.

Some day we shall view the world—the

mental and moral world—as a Zoological garden, and the discussion between philosophers and professors of happiness, private and social, as a fantastic wrangling between the ox, the kangaroo, and the camel, as to the superior merit of horns, pockets for one's progeny, or hunches on one's back; while here and there some mild philosophical pelican preaches conciliation: "Could we not agree on some common ideal that should unite the charms of the horn, the pocket and the hunch? What do you say, for instance, to my bill as a combination of the three? Is it not hard, hollow and voluminous? Therefore be reasonable, my friends. Love each other and imitate me. If you cannot grow a genuine bill like mine, at least you can wear a counterfeit in cardboard; something like a state religion on a larger scale—the modern faith."

Oh, weariness! let us love each other upon sufficient provocation and dispense with carnival noses. The modern faith is a matter of very little importance. There is none; we are not moving towards any such thing, nor have we left a faith of the past behind us. The golden age of Catholic belief has never existed out of the dreams of the bards. Men were as separated in the bosom of the Church as they are out of it, if division be measured by the bitterness of the

feud. Get them to agree on every possible subject you can think of, and they will invent one to quarrel about: the proper date for the celebration of Easter, the derivation of the Holy Ghost, the leavening of the bread, the number of fingers to be used in making the sign of the cross; the sign itself—graver still—shall it be made or not? and what about candles? or some equally profound problem.

It would be just the same to-morrow if we were all to rush into the same fold. All these great folds are nominal entities—mere verbal agreements; pelican's jokes. It is not thus that our myths really group us; they group us into small clans addicted to war. Janus-faced, they look both ways; they unite and oppose. By the desire that dictates them we are summoned in throngs; by the terms in which they are dictated—judgments, feelings, local necessities of conduct—we are sundered into different camps. We might possibly come to a general agreement in science, but at the cost of the synthetic desire. If there is any camp-forming virtue in science, it is in its unscientific fringe of contested theories; truth is passionless, neutral, and isolating. Or we could come to a general agreement in mystic rapture, but at the expense of all judgments or definitive endeavour.



nature or God which the religious instinct is ever craving for.

The various types of moral fauna will remain, and the struggle between them will never cease. But it is as betwixt nations: war may be for the destruction of all rivals and universal dominion, a monstrous and savage dream, or for some well-restricted local right. Morally we are in the monstrous and savage dream phase as long as we look upon our beliefs as images of some reality, and prize them for the truth which they have not, instead of honouring them as the realities that they are—as creatures, forms of life.

You draw up your list of virtues and articles of belief, and I draw up mine. It may so be that the only points the two lists have in common could be thus summed up: "Withdraw thy foot from the madhouse and from the hulks"—just the part which is of small interest to either of us. On all the rest we may disagree. We are thinking of different people, protesting against contrary excesses, warding off opposite dangers. Let us be honest, and say the only thing we can be sure of: "I find help in this or that thought; if you find what you need elsewhere, it is that your needs are different." Oh, the accursed hankering for uniformity!

Unless you have some particular class of

people in view to whom the same problems are likely to present themselves under the same forms, what solution can you propose? What on earth, or out of it, can you recommend? Any but the vaguest advice will be out of place as often as not. You can only exclaim to your congregation: "My beloved children, be good!" after which, as they depart with your benediction, you must call them back and add: "Yet be not too good."

Our various opinions and ideals are simply indicative of various schemes of psychical architecture, and our innermost thought is just as likely to contradict as to confirm the logic of our manners. A grave-faced worker may assure you when cross-examined that there is no other reason for our actions, and his in particular, than the love of pleasure. Roast him at the stake when a word would set him free, and ask him why he does not speak that word. He will answer with his dying breath: "I choose the finer sport." Nor is he jesting. The voice is part of his choir, the personage part of his pedigree. Some light-hearted ancestor, perhaps a sprightly, beaming-eyed little great-grandmother stirs within him, and not knowing well what to do with her in the austerity of his daily life, he has installed her

slightly aloof on the seat of honour, where she thrones as the fundamental postulate, the necessary hypothesis. She will come forward on state occasions to do the honours of the house, and redeem it by her smile from the grimness of pedantry. And the contrary may occur. The personage whose escutcheon is over the door may be much graver than the inmates of the house whom you usually meet. There is a sound of lutes and viols in the anterooms, a sparkle of carelessness on the whole scene; the pages playing at dice in the court, the guests banqueting in the hall. You push aside some curtain, and find yourself suddenly in presence of the *Pensieroso*, whose eternal dream stretches out beyond the horizon.

These two men will contradict each other at every step. If we judge by the canon of truth, one of them at least is insane or wicked. The world needs them both. I praise the appropriate and helpful myth, and shake the dust of my sandals on truth.

FINIS.



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